



Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

Affiliate of the International Palm Society

Monthly Update

February 2014

Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

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UPCOMING GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, February 5, 2014, 7:30 p.m. at the Mounts Bldg.

Speaker: Chris Migliaccio

Subject: Palms of Costa Rica

All photographs in this issue were provided by Charlie Beck.

SPECIAL THANK YOU

FOR FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER PREPARATION

Brenda A. La Platte in Brenda Beck's absence

Intense Weather Events Recorded in Palm Beach County by Charlie Beck

Recent weather events for rainfall and low temperatures were bad news for palm and cycad enthusiasts. Record rainfall was recorded on January 9. The lowest temperatures of the winter season thus far were recorded on January 19. I've gathered some statistics for easy comparison of how events affected different locales.

The 22.2 inch rainfall that swamped Boynton Beach on January 9th was described as a "once in 1,000 year event" by the National Weather Service. The record accumulation was recorded on I-95 at Gateway Blvd. Flooding resulted in the first-ever flood-related closing of the Interstate Highway. In just two hours 12.09 inches of rain fell, almost setting a national rainfall intensity record.

UPDATE: On January 23, 2014 temperatures dipped to 38° over most of our area.

Rainfall Totals for January 9, 2014	
22.21"	between Hypoluxo Road & Gateway Boulevard (East of I-95)
16.03"	Southern tip of Palm Beach Island
13.13"	Central Boynton Beach
12.46"	East Lantana Road
10.75"	Palm Beach
7.98"	Lake Worth
6.29"	Jupiter Farms
5.86"	North Palm Beach

Low Temperatures for January 19, 2014	
27°	Belle Glade
37°	Loxahatchee
39°	PBIA
39°	Juno Beach
41°	Stuart
42°	Boynton Beach
43°	Fort Lauderdale

(Data collected from The Palm Beach Post and the Sun Sentinel)

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FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Hyophorbe verschaffeltii*
by Charlie Beck

Hyophorbe verschaffeltii (photos page 3) is a monoecious, pinnate palm native to the Mascarene Island of Rodrigues. Rodrigues is located in the Indian Ocean 1,000 miles east of Madagascar. *H. verschaffeltii* is a stout solitary palm with a thick stem relative to its 25' maximum height. The stem is usually thicker in the center than at the ends. This is why its common name is Spindle Palm. The fronds can be slightly to strongly recurved. Its thick crownshaft can bulge at the base. The crownshaft can be green or bluish green or be green with vertical blue streaks. The inflorescence emerges below the crownshaft with a spathe which has a distinctive hornlike shape. The inflorescence bears attractive orange flowers on cream colored rachillae.

Hyophorbe verschaffeltii grows at low elevations in limestone based soils. This palm is critically endangered with less than 60 plants remaining in the wild. This palm is threatened by overgrazing, predation by rats and fragmentation of suitable habitat.

I always considered this palm as the poor brother to its more exotic sister *Hyophorbe lagenicaulis*, the Bottle Palm. I have since changed my mind and now consider *H. verschaffeltii* equally desirable. It shares many positive attributes including self cleaning fronds, hurricane resistance, and manageable size, but what really won me over was its beautiful inflorescence. When this palm is in full bloom and the inflorescences are backlit by the sun, it rivals all palms in beauty. In addition, its crownshaft can also be a showstopper. When it drops an old leaf, the newly exposed crownshaft can be very attractive with its streaked coloration.

I can attest that *H. verschaffeltii* is a survivor. I've seen it neglected and abused, planted at gas stations and other roadside locations with no irrigation or fertilization. Although these conditions don't produce

an award winning appearance, the palms do survive and do look acceptable. *H. verschaffeltii* is more cold tolerant than *H. lagenicaulis*. Back in the historic freeze of 1989, *H. lagenicaulis* were killed all over Jupiter by the cold, but *H. verschaffeltii* had a much higher survivor rate. I'm not sure *H. verschaffeltii* would be long lived in zone 9, but it should prove cold hardy in zone 10. Even though its native latitude is 19.7 degrees south, it seems to thrive at our latitude of 26.7 degrees north.

Even though it grows in limestone soil in habitat, it grows equally well in our sandy soil in Palm Beach County. *H. verschaffeltii* looks its best when planted in full sun. It also thrives in partial shade. Periodic inundation after heavy rain doesn't seem to set it back at all. I've never had to supplement its feeding with micronutrients.

We have six *H. verschaffeltii* planted in our garden. The original three plants are 20 years old. They are planted in full sun and are in an area which floods after heavy rain. The remaining three are seventeen years old. They are planted in partial shade in an area which never floods. Both plantings have thrived. The 20 year old, sun grown plants are 17' tall and have a stem with a diameter of 13 inches. The 17 year old, partially shaded plants are 19' tall and have a stem diameter of 11 inches.

Hyophorbe verschaffeltii is not a rare palm. It is easy to find at palm sales. Even though it isn't a rare palm in cultivation, it's still a great palm to include in your garden. It has a distinctively masculine appearance with its stout stem and stiff recurved fronds. To recap, consider the following desirable attributes: lot friendly size, self cleaning fronds, hurricane resistance, cold tolerance, attractive crownshaft and inflorescences. It is also reported to be salt tolerant.

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FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Hyophorbe verschaffeltii*



Hyophorbe verschaffeltii
blue-green crownshaft & hornlike spathe
20 years old in Beck Garden



Hyophorbe verschaffeltii
crownshaft after leaf drop
20 years old in Beck Garden



Hyophorbe verschaffeltii 42 years old
at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden



Hyophorbe verschaffeltii
WPB West of turnpike

Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden Rare Plant House



Areca vestiaria
attractive emerging frond



Areca vestiaria
colorful crown shaft



Dransfieldia micrantha
colorful stem



Cyrtostachys renda
'Theodora Buhler'

Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden (FTBG) Rare Plant House by Charlie Beck

I recently visited FTBG's Rare Plant House. This greenhouse is a climate controlled space. It also has a prepared soil rather than native limestone substrate. I have attempted to grow some of the palms that thrive in the Rare Plant House in our garden. Some can be grown outside in Palm Beach County but most cannot. That doesn't mean that we should stop trying to grow these tropical gems. Even though short lived, these plants are beautiful and are rewarding to grow. Pot culture might be the way to successfully grow these tropical gems so they can be protected from the cold.

Areca vestiaria (photo page 4 and page 6) is a plant that I have tried growing many times. I saw this palm growing to perfection in Cairns, Australia where it grows in seasonally flooded private gardens. Cairns has very high rainfall and is located in the hot tropics. Cold winter weather probably is the reason for my failure with this palm. I planted it in limestone soil and in sandy soil. I planted it in areas with excellent drainage and in areas that flood. I have never had any success growing this palm. I've tried the red and the orange forms.

The *Areca vestiaria* "red form" in the Rare Plant House is grown to perfection. It's been only been two years since planting. The emerging fronds have beautiful coloration. The frond matures to a deep green color and has widely spaced leaflets. The crownshaft is an orange-red color and the stilt roots add to this palm's interest.

Geonoma undata (photo page 7) is a palm that I have seen growing in habitat in Central and South America. I have failed at all attempts to grow this palm in our garden. I've always assumed that this palm is too cold sensitive to grow here outdoors in Palm Beach County. The specimen in the Rare Plant House is an impressive sight.

Verschaffeltia splendida (photo page 6) is a palm that is successfully grown outdoors at Flamingo Gardens in Davie. It grows at a high elevation which allows cold air to drain, and it is grown under a dense canopy of trees. I have never been successful growing this palm in our garden. I have seen it growing successfully as a potted plant but cold protection is required. Of course the specimen grown in the Rare Plant house is thriving there. The undivided leaves are impressive along with

the stilt roots. *Verschaffeltia splendida* was offered as a giveaway plant at our past Holiday Party. Grow this palm in pots.

Johannesteijsmannia perakensis (photo page 7) can be grown outdoors in Palm Beach County. It is reported to be more cold hardy than the other species of this genus. The specimen in our garden was planted 2 years ago. It is thriving in a wet area in heavy shade, but it does not look as good as the Rare Plant House specimen.

Zamia obliqua (photo page 6) is a real cycad gem with its puckered leaflets and showy cone. I've never tried this species in our garden but want to give it a try. Dale Holton told me that this is a species that grows well in Palm Beach County and that he has a few plants for sale at his nursery.

Noenicholsonia watsonii (photo page 6) is an attractive palm which I have had no luck growing in our garden. It is an attractive palm which you can only see growing at the Rare Plant House.



Licuala beccariana

Licuala beccariana (photo page 5) is a palm which lingered in our garden for many years before finally succumbing to cold weather in 2009. I was glad to see such a well grown specimen grown in the Rare Plant House. It's probably worth another try.

Dransfieldia micrantha (photo page 4) has a distinctive stem and crownshaft. I have not had any success growing this one in our garden.

Cyrtostachys renda 'Theodora Buhler' (photo page 4) is planted at the Rare Plant House. This variety of the Sealing Wax Palm has an interesting striped crownshaft unlike the typical red crownshaft. We had a specimen of the red Sealing Wax Palm planted in our garden. It thrived for more than a decade but finally succumbed to the cold winter of 2009. Since then I planted two additional plants in the ground and one in a pot which is submerged in a pond. The submerged plant is outgrowing the two ground planted palms. On cold nights I protect these plants with propane heaters. They are worth growing but protect them on cold nights.

Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden Rare Plant House



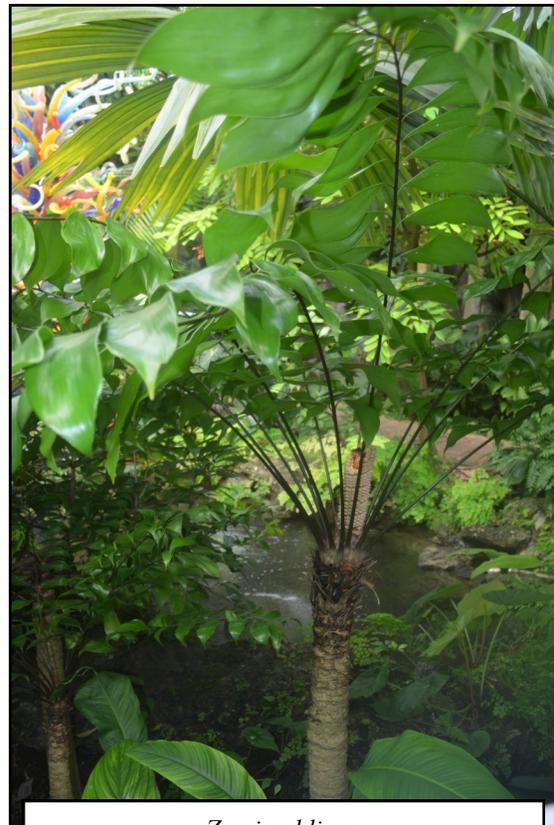
Areca vestiaria
stilt roots



Verschaffeltia splendida
undivided leaves



Noenicholsonia watsonii
note attractive leafbase coloration



Zamia obliqua
upright cone

Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden Rare Plant House



Geonoma undata



Johannesteijsmannia perakensis

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2014 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL NOW DUE

Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

Affiliate of the International Palm Society

Membership Application

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Y	

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