



# Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

*Affiliate of the International Palm Society*

Monthly Update

July 2015

## UPCOMING MEETING

July 1, 2015

7:30 p.m. at

Mounts Botanical Garden

**Subject:** Independence Day Pot Luck Dinner & Open Panel Discussion (Bring your questions and problems and share your solutions.)

### July Featured Auction Plant:

*Dypsis mananjarensis*

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### Appointees

Charlie Beck, Librarian  
Ruth Lynch, Refreshment Chairman  
Brenda Beck, Historian  
Brenda LaPlatte, Webmaster

## JUNE "THANK YOU"

**Door:** Lew Burger

**Food:** Don Bittel, Cathy Burger, Robin Crawford, Janice DiPaola, Duane Heiser, Ruth Lynch, Ed Napoli, Tom & Carol Ramiccio, Chris & Greg Spencer, Angela Valero

**Plants:** Dale Holton, Dr. Larry Noblick, Mick Pepler

**Ramble:** Heartfelt thanks to Jeff & Andrea Searle for their hospitality and a wonderful tour of their private garden. Also, thanks to Ruth & Terry Lynch for arranging this ramble.

## VISIT US AT

[www.palmbeachpalmcycadsociety.com](http://www.palmbeachpalmcycadsociety.com)

All photographs in this issue were provided by Charlie Beck unless otherwise specified.

Opinions expressed and products or recommendations published in this newsletter may not be the opinions or recommendations of the Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society or its board of directors.

**FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Normanbya normanbyi***  
*by Charlie Beck*

*Normanbya normanbyi* is a solitary, medium sized, pinnate palm. This monoecious palm can reach an ultimate height of 60 feet. The fronds are plumose and resemble the larger and much more common Foxtail Palm, *Wodyetia bifurcata*. Its common name is the Black Palm. Although the stem is gray in color, the internal color of the stem is black. The wood is very hard and the Aborigines traditionally used this wood for making spears.

*Normanbya* is a monotypic genus with a single species. It's native to northeastern Queensland, Australia which is located well within the tropics at a latitude of approximately 16 degrees south. It grows in wet rainforest and often in swampy areas near water-

courses. As many rainforest palms do, this palm usually germinates in the shade and then it eventually grows into much sunnier exposure. This palm's conservation status is considered vulnerable.

Fronds can range from 8 to 12 feet long. The leaf tops are dark green and the lower surface is silver. This palm has a light green to silver-green crownshaft. Petioles are very short. The leaflets are grouped and whorled. The leaflets are wedge shaped unlike the narrow parallel sided *Wodyetia bifurcata* leaflets. Mature seeds can be pink, red or a brownish purple.

*(Continued on page 3)*



*Normanbya normanbyi*  
in the Beck garden



*Normanbya normanbyi*  
in the Beck garden



*Normanbya normanbyi*  
Growing in Queensland Australia



*Wodyetia bifurcata* above  
*Normanbya normanbyi* below  
Leaf underside and petiole comparison



*Wodyetia bifurcata* above  
*Normanbya normanbyi* below  
Frond length comparison



*Wodyetia bifurcata* above  
*Normanbya normanbyi* below  
Leaflet comparison

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Considering this palm's tropical origin, you would expect it to be cold sensitive. Surprisingly a specimen planted in 1966 at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden (FTBG) survived two nights of 27 degree temperatures during the 1989 Christmas freeze. Fairchild's specimen showed no cold damage due to the record cold temperatures. We have five *N. normanbyi* planted in our garden. All five of our palms showed no cold damage after the record cold winters of 2009 and 2010. Reference books state that *N. normanbyi* is more cold sensitive than *W. bifurcata*, but I haven't noticed any difference in cold hardiness in our garden. Reference books also state that these palms prefer slightly acidic soil, but palms at FTBG in alkaline soil look fine.

If you like the look of a plumose palm you'll need to choose between *N. normanbyi* and *W. bifurcata*. The reasons to plant *N. normanbyi* are the following: shorter fronds, showier wedge shaped leaflets, silver leaflet undersides, slower growing, and less weedy seedling offspring. The negative aspects of *N. normanbyi* are they are less tolerant to full sun exposure at an early age and they do require moist

soil. Normal twice a week irrigation should be adequate.

The five *N. normanbyi* in our garden are 11 years old. The stems range from 15 to 21 feet tall measured to the bottom of the petioles. At waist height stems measure 6 ½ inches in diameter. Fronds measure 12 feet long. By comparison, similar age, *W. bifurcata* measure 25 feet tall with 14 foot long fronds and 10 ½ inch diameter stems. Both *N. normanbyi* and *W. bifurcata* have not developed any minor nutritional deficiencies when fertilized at the recommended rates. Without irrigation and proper fertilization, I've seen a lot of deficient *W. bifurcata* growing in public areas in Palm Beach County.

*N. normanbyi* are available from local palm nurseries. Viable local seed is available, so if there is a demand for this palm it can be readily propagated.

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## Jeff and Andrea Searle Garden

by Charlie Beck

Our Palm and Cycad Society toured Jeff and Andrea Searle's garden on June 13<sup>th</sup>. We had a good turnout of local Society members. If you missed the tour or if you want to revisit some of the fabulous palms and cycads that we saw, I'll share some of my photos in this and next month's newsletters.

Jeff and Andrea were gracious hosts. As Jeff and his right hand man, Ryan Gallivan, led the garden tour, Andrea served cold drinks to the participants. After the tour we had a nice lunch which featured many specialty dishes shared by the attendees.

As you probably know, Jeff has a large wholesale nursery in Southwest Ranches, Fl. Searle Brothers Nursery & the Rainforest Collection offers the largest variety of rare palms and cycads for sale in South Florida. If you are a palm enthusiast you should attend one of his twice a year sales at the nursery or see some of his offerings at our Chapter's Palm and Cycad Sales at the Mounts Garden. Jeff has returned as a vendor at our sales.

Jeff and Andrea's garden is 2 acres in size and is located 16.5 miles inland just south of Griffin Road. Jeff started with a blank slate on a cleared lot 15 years ago. He had 30 truckloads of quality soil delivered and spread prior to planting. I'm not sure what the underlying soil type is, but I'd bet it isn't sugar sand. I've seen a lot of marl type soil that far west and marl holds moisture and nutrients much better than typical Palm Beach County sugar sand. The health and vigor of the plants in Jeff's garden reflected expert maintenance and improved soil.

The Garden design featured many paths lined with rare and unusual plants. None of the beds were too wide, so plants were clearly visible. Many mature trees and palms formed a canopy which protected the under plantings.

The garden was much more than just palms and cycads. Gingers, heliconias, bamboos and other tropical plants were abundant. Jeff's collection of crotons was vast. I have never seen a more beautiful crotons anywhere! If you ever question Jeff about one of his plants that he sells, you should know he probably speaks from firsthand experience actually growing that plant.

Many of the photos feature palms which are new to South Florida. Because Jeff obtains a diverse group of rare palms for sale at his nursery, he's probably the first to grow many of the species. The photos provide proof that many of these palms can be grown successfully in South Florida. There are many new and exciting palms which we should try in Palm Beach County.

Thank you Jeff and Andrea for inviting us to your garden.

The following pages contain photographs of many of the specimens planted in the Searle garden.



*Cyrtostachys renda x elegans*



Jeff Searle with *Areca catechu* dwarf



*Areca catechu* dwarf



*Copernicia baileyana* foreground  
*Copernicia macroglossa* background



*Kentia pyramidalis*



*Heterospathe minor*



*Licuala merguensis*



*Licuala peltata* var. *peltata*



*Pelagodoxa henryana*



*Calyptrocalyx yamutumene*



*Verschaffeltia splendida*



*Drymophloeus hentyi*



*Hydriastele dransfieldii*



*Dypsis robusta*



*Itaya amicornum*



*Licuala sp*



*Dypsis carlsmithii*



*Dypsis carlsmithii* crownshaft



David Colonna with  
*Tahina spectabilis*



*Dypsis mananjarensis*  
Mealy Bug Palm



*Dypsis mananjarensis* petiole



Don Bittel with *Dypsis lastelliana*



*Burretiokentia koghiensis*



*Copernicia cowellii*





*Pseudophoenix vinifera*



*Coccothrinax borhidiana*



*Coccothrinax borhidiana*



*Ceratozamia euryphyllidia x miqueliana*

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