



Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

Affiliate of the International Palm Society

Monthly Update

August 2015

UPCOMING MEETING

August 5, 2015

7:30 p.m. at

Mounts Botanical Garden

Speaker: Joel Crippen

Subject: Twilight Walking Tour of
Mounts Botanical Garden

August Featured Auction Plant
Dypsis pembana

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Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society 2015 Officers & Executive Committee

Tom Ramiccio, President (561) 386-7812

Don Bittel, Vice President (772) 521-4601

Ruth Lynch, Secretary (561) 312-5046

Janice DiPaola, Director & Membership Chair
(561) 748-1918

Ingrid Dewey, Treasurer (561) 791-3300

Charlie Beck, Director & Editor (561) 963-5511

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JULY "THANK YOU"

Door: Roland Grondin

Food: Thanks to everyone that brought food to our
pot luck dinner. It was a huge success.

Plants: Dale Holton, Angie Peacock

VISIT US AT

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: *Attalea butyracea*
by Charlie Beck



16 year old *Attalea butyracea*
in Beck Garden



Attalea butyracea at Rio Palenque
Science Center in Ecuador



Attalea butyracea in fruit
in the Beck Garden
with distinctive coarse fiber

Attalea butyracea is a very large, solitary, pinnate palm with a wide distribution throughout Central and South America as well as Trinidad and Tobago. Its northern limit is Mexico and its southern limit is Bolivia. Its entire range is located within the tropics. *A. butyracea* is usually found at elevations below 1000'. Typical habitat is wet or seasonally wet forest or river margins. It can also be found in open savannas.

Stems can grow 70' tall and measure more than 2' in diameter. Fronds can measure up to 45' long including the length of the sheath (leaf base). Fronds are upright and resemble a shuttlecock. Leaflets spread in a single plane. Petioles are either very short or absent. The most distinguishing feature of this palm is that it's the only tall *Attalea* species which has persistent, stiff, coarse fibers along the petiole margins. Once you recognize these 8-16" long fibers, it's easy to identify this species.

Attalea butyracea is a monoecious palm with inflorescences which may have entirely male or female flowers, or have both male and female flowers on a single inflorescence. The woody, peduncular bract measures 6-11' long and is deeply grooved. Fruit can be orange, yellow or brown, and contains 1-3 seeds.

In 1995 *Maximiliana*, *Sheelea*, and *Orbignya* were lumped into the genus *Attalea*. The previous

four genera were distinguished by the shape of the male flowers. *Attalea butyracea* was previously known as *Sheelea butyracea*. *A. butyracea* along with all palms previously classified as *Sheelea* have male flowers with cylindrical petals. When keying an *Attalea* species, male flower type is a helpful feature for identification.

In 1996 we participated in the International Palm Society post biennial tour of Ecuador. Although we saw little primary forest left in Ecuador, we did tour Rio Palenque Science Center which encompassed a large area of primary forest in all of its glory. This science center was owned by Cal Dodson, renowned orchid authority and former Executive Director of the Marie Selby Botanical Garden in Sarasota, FL. We saw magnificent examples of *A. butyracea* along with many other palms and cycads growing in this forest. I roughly measured a fallen frond of *A. butyracea* and it exceeded 45' in length. I've included a photo of one of these palms from this trip.

In 1994 we planted seven palms labeled *Sheelea sp* along our driveway. This driveway is covered with several layers of pea gravel and is highly alkaline. Two of these palms turned out to be *Attalea butyracea*. We added a third *A. butyracea* 5 years later planted in an area away from the alkaline drive-

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Attalea sp. make statement lining Beck driveway

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way. Although the palms lining the driveway grew well, the palm planted in our native sandy soil seems happier. These palms grow quite well at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden (FTBG) so they are quite



Attalea butyracea with grooved bract growing in the Beck Garden

adaptable to different soil types. These palms also do not mind periodic inundation.

Our 21 year old palms have grown 22' tall, measured to the top of the growing point. Our 16 year old specimen is 20' tall. Stems measure almost 2 1/2' in diameter. With recommended fertilization and regular irrigation these palms reward you with rapid growth. *A. bu-*

tyracea has few rivals for announcing an entry or lining a driveway.

These are massive palms with heavy fronds, even when dried. The fronds tend to crush under plantings when they fall. Even the cut leaf bases are incredibly heavy. It won't be long before our palm fronds will be unreachable without the use of a step-ladder and a 21' pole saw. These are not self-cleaning palms. Eventually the dried leaves do fall on their own after persisting for a few months. The old inflorescences also tend to persist for quite a while.

Our specimen planted in native sand has never shown any nutritional deficiencies, but the ones in alkaline soil have shown occasional evidence of boron deficiency. Frizzled leaflets midway along the rachis is an indication of boron deficiency. It's not a chronic problem.

All of our *Attalea* species showed no cold damage after the record cold winters of 2009 and 2010. The palms at FTBG also survived the two nights of 27 degree temperature during the Christmas Freeze of 1989. There was a tall *Attalea sp* located on Haverhill Rd just south of 45th Street in West Palm Beach which also survived the winter of 1989.

A. butyracea is available from local palm vendors. If you have the space for this magnificent palm give it a try. It will certainly attract a lot of attention.

Village Marina
 396 Torpey Road
 Fort Pierce, Florida. 34946
Wes Taylor
 Office 772-464-4391 Cell 772-519-1297

(561) 586-2332

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 Lake Worth, FL 33461

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5221 3rd Road
 Lake Worth, FL 33467
 Phone (561) 965-6792
 Email cycadnut@gate.net

"By appointment only"

More Photographs Taken in Jeff Searle's Garden



Dypsis prestoniana



Astrocaryum sp.



Areca vestiaria



Zombia antillarum



Zombia antillarum



Lepidozamia hopei



Kerriodoxa elegans



Copernicia alba



Hydriastele pinangoides

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More Photographs Taken in Jeff Searle's Garden



Dypsis albofarinosa



Dypsis albofarinosa



*Caroxylon
macrospermum*



Cyrtostachys elegans



Pinanga coronata



Pinanga coronata



Archontophoenix purpurea



Licuala thoana



Licuala sp.



Licuala naumannii

Iron Deficiency

by Charlie Beck

Iron deficiency was discussed at our July meeting. Although iron sulfate is most often supplied in palm fertilizer, chelated forms of iron are more effective. EDIS publication #ENH 1013 states the following:

“Soil applications of iron sulfate are generally less effective than some of the chelated compounds such as FeDTPA, FeEDDHA, or FeHEEDTA since free Fe ions are rapidly oxidized under most soil conditions to the insoluble Fe form. On alkaline soils FeEDDHA is the most effective product, followed by FeHEEDTA and FeDTPA. FeDTPA is the most effective product for foliar application, but it’s important to note that all of these chelates can be phytotoxic to palms and other plants when applied at high rates. Follow application guidelines on the label for these products.”

I mentioned a brand of FeEDDHA named Sequestrene 138Fe that I used to treat iron deficiency on *Coccothrinax crinita*. This palm is planted in highly alkaline soil and several applications of iron sulfate had no effect on the palm’s health. I applied 1 ½ ounces of Sequestrene 138Fe mixed with 3 gallons of water to the root zone. I also sprayed a half gallon of the same dilution on the foliage. After 2 months the palm began pushing deep green fronds. For



Coccothrinax crinita 2 months after application of iron chelate

the prior year only yellowed fronds emerged. I have recently reapplied the same amount FeEDDHA to the soil.

I also applied the same dosage of FeEDDHA, iron chelate to *Metroxylon vitiense* & *Dypsis lastelliana*. The *M. vitiense* is planted in sugar sand away from highly alkaline pea gravel or shell rock. The *D. lastelliana* is planted beside an alkaline pea gravel driveway. Both of these palms responded to this application of iron chelate. The *M. vitiense* has a fully emerged dark green frond. The *D. lastelliana* is a much slower growing palm and has looked sickly for many years, but it is now pushing a dark green spear leaf.

Keep in mind that applying FeEDDHA to the soil and spraying on the foliage did NOT turn yellow fronds green. You must wait for new fronds to emerge to see dark green fronds. In all cases I have observed that the fronds that were emerging at the time of the iron chelate application, show yellow on the outer portion of the leaf and dark green on the portion closer to the leaf base. The leaf actually records the dramatic difference in iron uptake before and after the dosage!

It was brought to my attention by society member Steve Aberbach that FeEDDHA is available locally at Helena Chemical Co. in Boynton Beach. Sequestrene 138Fe and a less expensive brand, Ferrilene are available at that location. Both brands should perform the same.

If you have palms with chronic iron deficiency, you might want to try FeEDDHA. Do not exceed label recommendations. This product is toxic when over applied. One tablespoon per gallon of water is the recommended dilution. Three gallons of soil drench was effective on our *Coccothrinax crinita*. Dr. Broschat has told me that chelated forms of iron are 10 times as effective as iron sulfate by weight. 0.2 percent of iron chelate is equivalent to 2.0 percent of iron sulfate.



49 year old *Corypha utan* flowering at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden