



# Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

*Affiliate of the International Palm Society*

Monthly Update

September 2015

## UPCOMING MEETING

September 2, 2015

7:30 p.m. at

Mounts Botanical Garden

**Speaker:** Jason Lopez, Living Collection Manager at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden

**Subject:** People, Plants and Places: A Travelogue from Europe to Thailand

**September Featured Auction Plant**

*Pritchardia beccariana*  
*Johannesteijsmannia altifrons*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Page

- 1 Upcoming Meetings and featured auction plants
- 1 Palm Society Board Contact Numbers
- 2 **FEATURED THIS MONTH:**  
*Pritchardia beccariana*
- 4 The Tender Tropicals: *Cyrtostachys renda*
- 5 Palm Identification 101
- 6 Annual picnic and Fall plant sale dates in October

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## AUGUST "THANK YOU"

**Door:** Tom Ramiccio

**Food:** Robin Crawford, Ingrid Dewey, Janice Di-Paola, Ed Napoli, Tom Ramiccio

**Plants:** Dale Holton, Gary Wilburn

## VISIT US AT

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

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

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**FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Pritchardia beccariana***  
by Charlie Beck

*Pritchardia beccariana* is a medium sized costapalmate palm native to Hawaii. It grows in very wet forest on gentle slopes at elevations between 1,000 – 4,200 feet. It occurs on the Big Island on lava flows in Volcanoes National Park. Populations are scattered or occur in small groups. It is estimated that a thousand or more remain in seven known populations. It is thought to have occurred at lower elevations, even at sea level, prior to deforestation. Due to habitat destruction and predation by rats, pigs and other grazing animals, this palm is considered a Species of Concern.

*P. beccariana* is solitary and monoecious. Even though the leaves are costapalmate, they are nearly flat, unlike most other Hawaiian *Pritchardia* species. It resembles *Pritchardia pacifica* which is usually considered the most attractive *Pritchardia* species and in my opinion might be the most beautiful palmate palm in existence. Don Hodel states in his book, *Loulu the Hawaiian Palm*, “perhaps *P. beccariana* is the most handsome and imposing loulu.” Loulu is the common name for Hawaiian *Pritchardia* species. Hodel also mentioned that the taxonomist who named *P. beccariana* described it as “a beautiful palm of fine symmetry.”

*P. beccariana* can grow 60’ tall in habitat, but it usually tops out at 40 feet. The leaves are large. They can measure up to 6’ across and be held on 6’ long petioles. Stems typically measure 10” in diameter. Mature fruit are large and shiny black. They can be spherical or oval and measure about 1.5” long. The seeds are edible and are compared in taste to coconuts.

Lucky for us, *P. beccariana* is much more cold tolerant than *P. pacifica* and it is a fast grower in Palm Beach County. Our 10 year old specimen measures 12’ to the growing point. The stem measures 7” in diameter. The leaves measure 4’ across and the petioles are 4’ long. For comparison our *Pritchardia pacifica* leaves also measure 4’ across but the petioles are 3’ long, so the crown of leaves is more compact.

Our *P. beccariana* came through the record cold winters of 2009 and 2010 without any apparent damage to the leaves. Many years later, as the palm grew, a minor constriction of the stem did appear. This was a historical record of those cold winter seasons. *P. beccariana* is not affected by periodic short term flooding.

*P. beccariana* grows in a wet forest with a relative evenly distributed precipitation, so it does require supplemental irrigation in Palm Beach County. Our garden is irrigated twice a week, only if it hasn’t rained. This seems like an adequate level of moisture for this palm. We planted our specimen in a partially shaded area and it has since grown into a full sun situation. I think it can be grown in full sun at an early age if it is slowly adapted to the sun.

Keep in mind that some *Pritchardia* species like *P. pacifica* and *P. thurstonii* are susceptible to lethal yellowing. I do not know if *P. beccariana* is susceptible or not, but I do know that it has performed well in our garden over the last 10 years. *P. beccariana* is not a self-cleaning palm but it is easily trimmed with a pole pruner.

*P. beccariana* is not a palm commonly planted in South Florida. Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden does not list this palm on their plant list. This palm is rarely available at palm sales, but our Palm and Cycad Society has obtained a few of these palms and they will be auctioned at our upcoming monthly meetings. I strongly recommend that you give it a try.



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"By appointment only"



*Pritchardia beccariana* (above)  
*Pritchardia pacifica* (below) leaf comparison





*Pritchardia thurstonii* (left) and  
*Pritchardia beccariana* (right)  
Same age size comparison in the Beck Garden



Potted 3 year old *Cyrtostachys renda*  
growing partially submerged  
in the Beck Garden

### **The Tender Tropicals: *Cyrtostachys renda*** 9<sup>th</sup> in a series by Don Bittel

Note: This article is a reprint of an article and photos originally published in the Palm Society's newsletter in August 1999.

One of the most colorful and ornamental of all palms is the Red Sealing Wax Palm, *Cyrtostachys renda*. With its glossy scarlet crownshafts and petioles, a cluster of this palm is outstanding in any palm collection. It is a truly tender tropical palm which needs our protection on the occasional frosty night in south Florida.

We have all marveled at the beauty of this palm, usually as we began growing palms. We were all told that it couldn't be grown here, and not to waste our time and money on this incredible palm. But times have changed since then. The tropical countries have been growing this palm by the thousands, and larger specimens have dropped in price and become more affordable. And with a little bit of extra care, we can grow this tropical beauty without sacrificing so much in time and money. These larger specimens have proven easier to grow than the very tender and slow seedlings that we have all lost, even when babying them.

*Cyrtostachys renda* is native to the tropical coastal areas of Thailand, Malaysia, Sumatra, and Borneo. It thrives in heat, humidity, and soggy soil. It grows very well in the south Florida

summers, but slows down when the temperature drops below 60 degrees. If you can find a sunny spot in the winter for this palm that is protected from any northerly winds, it will continue to grow and look good through the winter. And if the forecast is for a low of 40 degrees or less, it must be brought inside the heated house or greenhouse, or the foliage will surely suffer. Smaller specimens can die at 40, but it usually takes 35 or 36 to kill a larger palm. Even if they survive this temperature, it would take it so long to recover that it wouldn't be pretty again for a long time.

*Cyrtostachys renda* looks its best if grown in full sun to light shade. It will grow in full shade, but the color will fade some. There are variations in color on these palms, even from the same batch of seedlings. There is an orange variety, but it would be best to see the color than rely on seed from an orange colored parent. Some growers think that the orange color is from too much shade and that it will turn more red in full sun.

The name *Cyrtostachys renda* comes from the Greek *cyrto*, meaning arched, and *stachys*, meaning spike, in reference to its curved inflorescence. *Renda* is from a native name. The old species name was *lakka*. That was when the two were separated because *renda* was a taller

(Continued on page 5)

## Palm Identification 101

by John Kennedy

“You know a lot about palms, doncha?”

“A bit.”

“Well, my neighbor across the street—Bill and Edna—have this humongous palm and I’d like to know what it’s called.”

“You could ask them what it is.”

“Well, they don’t know. It was there in front of the house when they moved in maybe 10 years ago. It’s beautiful.”

“Is it pinnate or palmate?”

“What?”

“If it’s pinnate, there’s a stem running down the center of the leaf and small leaflets hanging down on either side.”

“Gotta think about that.”

“Is it like a Queen Palm?”

“Queen Palm?”

“Or is it palmate, the shape of your hand?”

“I dunno.” Looks at his hand.

“Have you noticed anything else about this palm?”

“Yes, there is funny stuff on the trunk.”

“Like maybe air plants or spines.”

“I don’t think so.”

“I need to know more about the palm to identify it.”

“You can take a look. It’s in front of that brown house on the other side of the street in the next block. Ugly color, my wife says.”

“I know the one you mean. A couple of lawn flamingos next to it.”

“That’s it! What is it?”

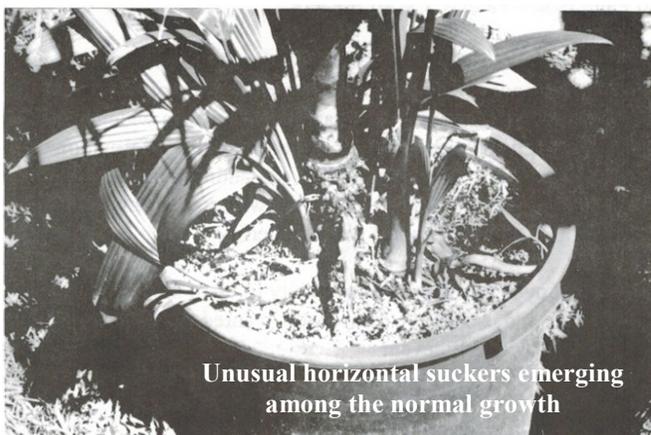
(Continued on page 6)

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(*Cyrtostachys renda* Continued from page 4)

palm with a round seed, and *laaka* was a shorter palm with an oblong seed. But they have been merged together since this was normal variation of the species *renda*.

So if you don't have one of these fantastic scarlet palms yet, go out and get one. Keep it where you can see it every day, just to remind yourself of why you got into growing palms in the first place: to grow something that not everyone else on the block had in their front yard!



# SAVE THESE DATES



## Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society Fall Plant Sale

at Mounts Botanical Garden

October 10, 2015  
9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

and

October 11, 2015  
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.



## Palm Society Annual Picnic and Best Auction of the Year

October 17, 2015

10:00 a.m.: Garden Tour  
11:30 a.m.: Pot Luck Lunch  
Noon: Auction

In Ruth Sallenbach's fantastic garden

Please bring a chair, main or side dish, and a plant donation (of any kind) for the auction.



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*(Palm Identification 101 Continued from page 5)*

"It's a Cabbage Palm, 20 feet high."

"Doesn't look like cabbage."

"Umm. . ."

"And the stuff on the trunk?"

"Called 'boots', the ends of the peti—I mean ends of the stems of leaves that have died."

"Hey, rare palm, huh?"

"Not exactly."

"Thanks for the name. I'm not confused anymore."

"Good."

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