



Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

Affiliate of the International Palm Society

Monthly Update

July 2016

June "THANK YOU"

Door: Charlie & Brenda Beck

Food: Don Bittel, Ingrid Dewey, Janice DiPaola, Chip Jones, Elise Moloney, Ed Napoli, Angie Peacock, Tom & Carol Ramiccio, Mary & Tom Whisler

Plants: Dale Holton, Chip Jones, Palm City Palms, Mick Pepler

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Appointees

Brenda Beck, Historian
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UPCOMING MEETING

July 6, 2016
7:30 p.m.

At Mounts Botanical Garden

Speaker: Lenny Goldstein, President of the
South Florida Palm Society

Subject: 35 year old volunteer palm
planting project at Zoo Miami

FEATURED AUCTION PLANTS:
Allagoptera (Polyandrocos) caudescens
Johannesteijsmannia altifrons

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www.palmbeachpalmcycadsociety.com

All photographs in this issue were provided
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Featured This Month: *Elaeis oleifera*
by Charlie Beck

Elaeis oleifera is native to tropical Central and South America. In Central America it ranges from Honduras to Panama. In South America it's found in coastal countries ranging from Surinam in the east to Peru in the west. A population can be found in central Brazil but some consider these to be introduced by man. *E. oleifera* mostly occurs in low lying wet areas and can be found by mangrove swamps.

The genus *Elaeis* contains two species, the more familiar *E. guineensis*, the African Oil Palm, and *E. oleifera*, the American Oil Palm. The current theory is that *Elaeis* originated in the Americas and was later introduced into Africa. The only other genus found in both Africa and America is *Raphia*. Both *Elaeis* species are used for palm oil production, although the African Oil Palm is used to a much greater extent. Hybrids between the two species are being tested for oil production because the short stature of *E. oleifera* is a desirable feature, which eases fruit harvest.

E. oleifera has a short or sometimes a pro-cumbent stem. It may grow vertically to 20' or may grow horizontally along the ground, rooting from the lower surface of the stem. The stem remains covered with tightly packed persistent leaf bases. Stems stripped of leaf bases measure up to 16" in diameter. Fronds measure 10 - 18' long and petioles are armed with recurved teeth. Leaflets are arranged in a single plane. This is a monoecious palm but inflorescences usually alternate either male or female. The inflorescences are born right next to the stem and are tightly packed within the leaf bases. Female flowering branches terminate in a sharp point.

When young, *E. oleifera* and *E. guineensis* inflorescences and stems look similar, so differentiate *E. oleifera* by the arrangement of leaflets about the rachis. Leaflets of *E. guineensis* are arranged in several planes and on *E. oleifera* they are in a single plane. Of course stem height is another distinguishing feature. *E. guineensis* has an erect stem which can reach 60' tall.

E. oleifera has been grown in South Florida for quite some time. Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden's (FTBG) first planting dates back to 1959. Fairchild's last planting was in 1994 which is the same year that we planted the specimen in our garden. Ruth Sallenbach has an attractive mature specimen growing in her garden. I'd bet that Ruth's palm is older than 22 years and is probably the largest specimen in Palm Beach County. In 32 years of touring private palm gardens in South Florida, I cannot remember seeing this palm other than in Ruth's garden. On a trip to Ecuador in 1996, I did photograph a palm which was a hybrid between *E. oleifera* and *E. guineensis*. It was planted in Don Brainard's fabulous palm garden. See photo on page 3 to see how fantastic this palm looks when cultivated in the tropics.

E. oleifera is rarely available for sale in South Florida or from mail order palm nurseries. I purchased three of these palms in 1993 at a South Florida Palm Society sale at FTBG. Of those three palms, two were actually *E. guineensis*. Whether our *E. oleifera* is a true species or a hybrid with *E. guineensis* is not certain, but it has all of the characteristics of the true species.

Of all of the palms that we have planted in our garden, *Attalea crassispata* and *E. oleifera* are the two palms that I am the most proud of. *Attalea crassispata* is one of the rarest palms on the planet and I was lucky to obtain one of these palms from FTBG's effort to save this palm from extinction in Haiti. My attachment to this palm was deepened when I saved it from decline by recognizing a boron deficiency which would have probably killed it. I also saved *E. oleifera* from likely death after extreme cold damage caused by the record cold temperatures experienced in 2009. The emerging frond collapsed and the bud was damaged by exposure to repeated cold temperatures. I have never had a palm survive such bud damage. Norm Moody, palm expert extraordinaire, told me that I could improve its chance of sur-

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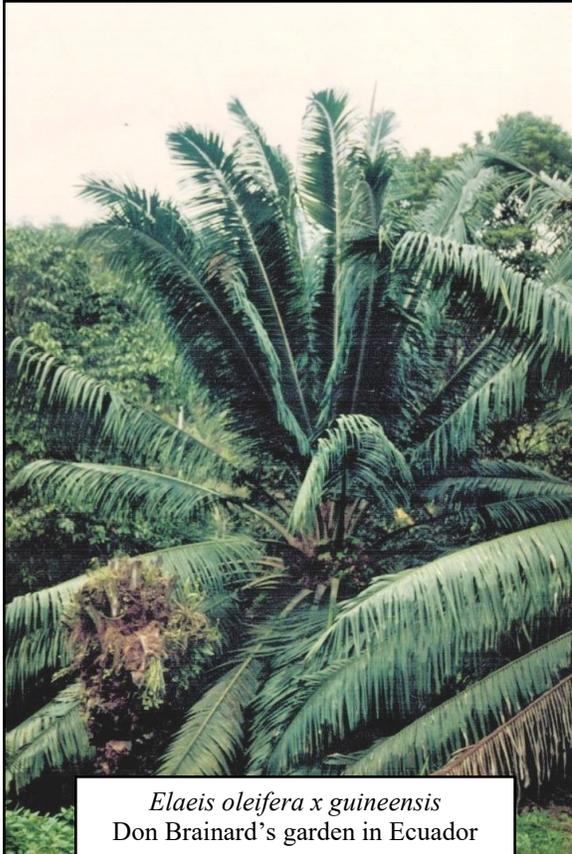
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"By appointment only"



Elaeis oleifera
in the Sallenbach garden



Elaeis oleifera x guineensis
Don Brainard's garden in Ecuador



Elaeis oleifera
22 years old in the Beck garden



Elaeis oleifera
22 years old in the Beck garden



Elaeis oleifera
infructescence



Elaeis oleifera petiole



Elaeis oleifera
male inflorescence



Elaeis oleifera
fibrous stem



Surprise in the Garden
See page 6

More Greenery (Palms and Cycads!) Helps You Live Longer

by John Kennedy

You know when you're approaching a palm collector's house. The neighborhood is full of open lawns, a few trees, maybe even a couple of bushes. But at one property you can't see the house for all the greenery. It's not just palms and cycads, either, but also gardenias, crotons, native shrubs, and more. One thing the neighbors don't know -- maybe while shaking their heads at the 'overgrown' property -- the palm enthusiast in the house just out of sight will probably live longer than the owners of the bare properties in the vicinity.

A new study in *Environmental Health Perspectives*, an online magazine published by the National Institutes of Health, has tantalizing figures supporting this in the June issue. The study, conducted by Harvard School of Public Health and Brigham and Woman's Hospital, Boston, followed more than 100,000 nurses over an 8-year period, 2000-2008, with questionnaires supplemented by visual overhead shots of the participants' home addresses to figure the degree of greenery — and its intensity — together with their mortality rate that was indexed to numerous other factors including individual health and the environment. Was the address urban, suburban, rural, or some modification of these? Measurement was also taken of the intensity/thickness of the greenery around individual residences. Seasonal and regional variations were taken into account.

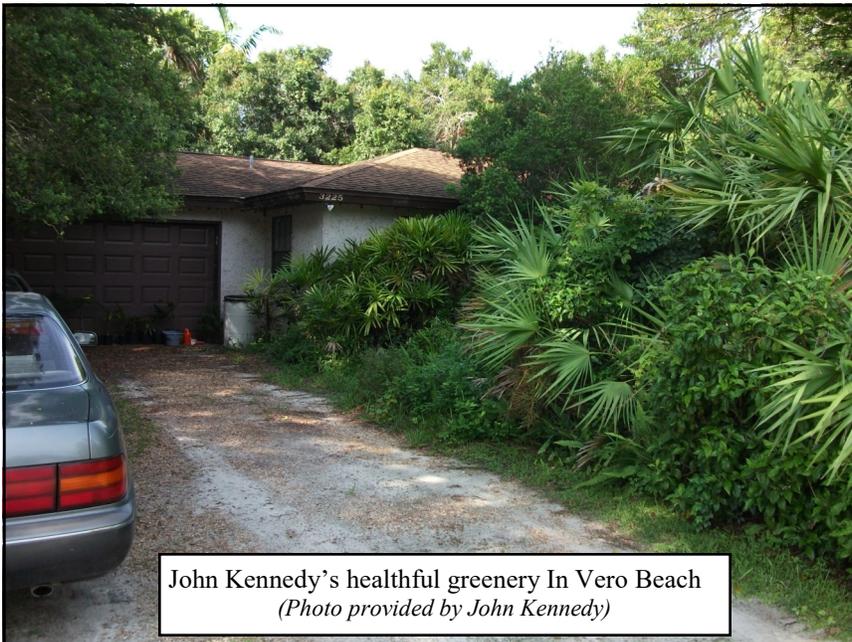


The result: a 12% lower mortality among those living amid substantial greenery. This was particularly notable with respiratory problems and with cancer. Researchers theorized that greenery not only cut down on pollution but also encouraged outdoor exercise.

So, if any members have wives who kvetch about all those palms 'n' stuff, the results of this study can be cited as a vital reason for having a big collection. One quibble: the participants in the study were overwhelmingly female. Um. Re-adjust dial. All those palms and cycads are helping the wives' health, too. We are extrapolating here that it also assists the husbands' reduction in mortality, too (adjusted for smoking, drinking, and other unfortunate proclivities).

Ah, you ask, how close a density are we talking about? The study figured, first, within 250m of the participant's residence. OK, a meter is a little more than a yard, 39.3701 inches. So, maybe within 800 feet of the house. Now that would carry the calculations beyond most homeowners' lots — for my block in Vero Beach, four lots each fronting 150 feet on the street — would be 600 feet. Half a block more would do it. Would corner lots get an even bigger advantage? I don't know.

The researchers carried their figuring a bit farther, to greenery within 1,250m or 3,750 feet. This works out to be almost three-quarters of a mile from the house.



John Kennedy's healthful greenery In Vero Beach
(Photo provided by John Kennedy)

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vival by cutting away fronds and exposing the bud. This was major surgery that I would have never done without Norm's guidance. I used a reciprocating saw armed with a pruning blade to cut away all petioles. It was radical surgery but I thought it was the palm's only chance to survive. Once the bud was exposed, I cut out any rotted portions and then applied hydrogen peroxide on an almost daily basis until I could see healthy emerging growth. I was surprised that this palm survived. After that experience, whenever temperatures are predicted to dip below 40°F, I place a propane heater beside this palm and run it on the low setting throughout the night. After 22 years the bud is only 5' above ground so this is great way to protect this short palm.

The photos of this palm do not show its true scale. It's larger than it appears. Fronds measure 17' in length and its slow vertical growth translates to requiring a lot of garden space. If the stem decides to grow horizontally along the ground even more space is required. Luckily the stem on our palm is growing verti-

cally and has shown no tendency to lean over. Locating this palm next to our driveway was not the best choice but we do get to admire it every time we enter or exit the property. I fertilize this palm every 3 months with a high quality palm fertilizer. The leaves are always a beautiful emerald green color and have never shown any nutritional deficiency.

If you can find this palm for sale and have the space, give it a try. Due to cold sensitivity, I would not recommend growing this palm too far west of Military Trail. Cold hardiness must vary individually because the many specimens planted at FTBG survived the 1989 Christmas freeze when temperature dropped to 27°F on two consecutive nights. Ruth's Sallenbach's specimen probably survived even colder temperatures in her garden that year. Even though this palm loves wet soil any regularly irrigated garden should suffice. It grows well in full sun or shady areas. It is not invasive like its African relative. I've noticed no concentration of seedlings around the base of this palm.

(Continued from page 5)

If we're all going to get healthier (including us males), a neighborhood campaign might be in order. Within two blocks of my house, I can spot properties where no tree dare to exist and where a few small shrubs — kept to no more than 3 feet — are allowed to live. The inhabitants are afraid, seemingly, that a tree might fall on the roof in a hurricane and large shrubs could do damage. The objective may be that while the owners might not live as long as hoped, they will pass on to their heirs an undamaged house. Somehow, I don't think that the study included 2-inch lawns as "greenery." I also recall that about a quarter of the roofs in Vero got partially or fully blown off during the 2004 hurricanes — even in locations lacking nearby trees.

Years ago, while living in Gainesville, I noted that the City of Gainesville sponsored a spring planting festival (very much big-time), particularly of flowering trees and shrubs, in conjunction with the state forestry dept. The prices, I recall, were reasonable. And, definitely, Gainesville was and is Tree City.

The study seems to imply a positive boost to public health in planting more greenery in cities. If you have a head for statistics and don't automatically distrust science and scientists, you can go look at study yourself: <http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/15-10363/>. It's downloadable in PDF form (33 pages) in case you feel the need to bolster your argument.

Surprise in the Palm Garden

by Charlie Beck

There's always surprise in the palm garden. Sometimes they are pleasant and sometimes not. Some palms outgrow their space or don't grow at all. At times understory palms outgrow or crowd their canopy. Growth rates rarely proceed as planned, but sometimes perfection (most times fleetingly) is achieved.

The view from my stationary exercise bike has just become one of those magical vistas. I get to admire it for 30 minutes every day. I always enjoyed the view, but then the silver *Copernicia baileyana* poked up above the *Arenga undulatifolia* and *Corypha utan*. With the blooming Firespike in the foreground and the *Roystonea oleracea* in the background, it hit me that this is an extraordinary view! Contrasting textures and colors combine to create a beautiful vista without any planning by me. When the hummingbirds return and feed on the firespike, they will enhance the experience.

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