

GROWING *Allagoptera caudescens* IN PALM BEACH COUNTY

Submitted by Charlie Beck

I first saw *Allagoptera* (formerly *Polyandrococos*) *caudescens* while touring Dale Holton's garden. I came upon this unique palm and it stopped me in my tracks. The top side of the frond looked like a dark green coconut leaf but the underside of the leaf was as white as any *Astrocaryum* or *Cryosophila*. Dale informed me it was then known as *Polyandrococos caudescens* and was native to Brazil. *Polyandrococos* was a monotypic genus but was combined with *Allagoptera*. *Allagoptera* is closely related to *Attalea*, *Lytocaryum*, and *Syagrus*. *Allagoptera*

| GROWING CONDITIONS IN OUR GARDEN FOR <i>Allagoptera caudescens</i> | |
|---|--|
| Location | 4 miles from ocean in suburban Lantana |
| Soil | Sand over a layer of hardpan (pineland flatwood habitat) |
| Irrigation | ¾ inch applied twice a week |
| Flooding | Periodic inundation in sandy soil acceptable |
| Fertilization | 3 times a year with Palm special analysis |
| Light | Shade |
| Micronutrient Deficiencies | None observed |
| Insect Damage | None observed |
| Hurricane Resistance | Excellent |

caudescens is a monoecious palm with a solitary stem usually 12 to 24 feet tall in habitat, but the stem can also be short or subterranean. The fronds are pinnate with an extremely short petiole. These palms are native to lowland tropical rainforest along the coast of Brazil at elevation of up to 1,000 feet. They are reported to persist in cleared areas which indicate they will tolerate full sun exposure.

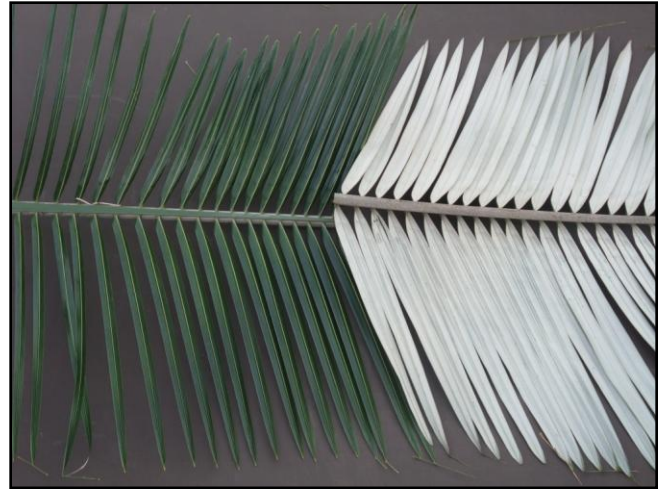
I have three specimens planted in the shade in an area which is prone to flooding during heavy rain. Dale Holton and Ruth Sallenbach also have their palms planted in the shade. My palms are 16 years old and the largest has an overall height of 11 feet with 18 inches of trunk measuring 10 inches in diameter. These palms are not fast growing.

Some of the reference books indicate they are not cold hardy, but as you can see from the photos, no cold damage is apparent after our 2010 extended cold winter. Another interesting feature of this palm is that it traps leaf litter in its crown (see photo on page 11).

Allagoptera caudescens is not an easy palm to find but some local vendors do offer it for sale. Grow this palm for its unique form, manageable size, and vividly contrasting foliage. You might even try this palm in full sun as Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden's website recommends.



16 year-old *Allagoptera caudescens*
planted in the Beck garden.



Comparison of top and underside
of *Allagoptera caudescens* leaf

(Photos by Charlie Beck)



Leaf litter in *Allagoptera caudescens* crown