

GROWING *Burretiokentia hapala* IN PALM BEACH COUNTY

Submitted by Charlie Beck

Burretiokentia hapala is endemic to New Caledonia. It grows in moist wet forests at elevations of 150 to 1,500 feet. This solitary palm grows under forest canopy but can be emergent with an ultimate height of 45 feet. It has glossy pinnate leaves up to seven feet long displayed on short petioles. It has a green stem with prominent white indented rings. The bulging crownshaft is very distinctive as is the woolly inflorescence.

We have three specimens of various ages growing in our garden under different light conditions. The oldest is 17 years old with an overall height of 11 feet with a 3.5 inch diameter stem. The leaves measure five feet long. This palm was originally planted in partial shade but is now growing in full sun due to hurricane damage in 2004. It showed no ill effects due to our record cold winter. Our other specimens are two and five years old – one in full sun and the other is full shade. The one in full shade is more robust and has reached an overall height of 6.5 feet after two years in the ground.

In our garden, *B. hapala* has had a high success rate. We lost two specimens due to hurricane activity but even those grew well up to that point.

We have also tried other *Burretiokentia* species. *B. veillardii* grew well in pots but all died quickly when planted in the ground. I have recently acquired *B. dumasii* and *B. koghiensis* but they are years away from planting in the ground.

B. hapala is well adapted to growing in Palm Beach County. Plant in the shade with ample irrigation for best growth. Plant it for the glossy leaves, bulging crownshaft and fuzzy inflorescence. It is a distinctive small palm which every palm enthusiast should try to grow.



Burretiokentia hapala
inflorescence on specimen at
Fairchild Tropical Botanic Gardens

(Photo by Charlie Beck)



Burretiokentia hapala at Fairchild
Tropical Botanic Gardens
(Photo by Charlie Beck)



Two *Burretiokentia hapala* specimens growing in the Beck garden.

(Photos by Charlie Beck)