

GROWING
Heterospathe cagayanensis
IN PALM BEACH COUNTY

Submitted by Charlie Beck

Heterospathe cagayanensis is a small pinnate palm native to the Cagayan Islands in the Philippines. It can either be acaulescent (without aboveground stem) or have a slow growing upright stem. It naturally grows in shady moist forests. The main attraction of this little gem is its colorful purple petioles and inflorescence. Emerging leaves are bronze with purple mid veins. Like other *Heterospathe* species, this palm is monoecious.

We planted our *H. cagayanensis* in 2006. It seemed unaffected by our record cold winters of 2009 and 2010. Leaves grow to a maximum length of 6' and are mostly upright so this palm doesn't require much space. I've never noticed any micro-nutritional deficiency when fertilized at the recommended rate. It is planted in an area that occasionally floods after heavy rain which doesn't seem to faze this palm. It is planted in 'sugar sand' soil which has been enriched by frequent heavy applications of mulch. Our specimen is acaulescent so it will always be at ground level for easy viewing.

This little palm always draws my attention. I can't walk by it without stopping to admire it. The colorful petioles and emergent leaves are the standout features but the older fronds also look quite healthy. It hardly takes up any space at all so every collector should have one. This palm isn't usually available at local nurseries so you have to be vigilant if you want to find it for sale. I'll try to obtain a few of these for our meeting auctions. If our specimen produces seed this year, I'll propagate it for auction.



Heterospathe cagayanensis in the Beck garden.

