

GROWING *Neoveitchia storkii* IN PALM BEACH COUNTY

Submitted by Charlie Beck

Neoveitchia storkii is native to a limited area on Viti Levu, Fiji Islands. *Neoveitchia storkii* grows in moist alluvial plains and are canopy emergent. This palm is in danger of extinction due to habitat loss. Most areas where this palm appears naturally have been converted to agriculture or mahogany plantations.



In habitat, the trunks are 10 inches in diameter and normally 35 to 40 feet high but can reach 60 to 65 feet tall under high canopy. Fronds can grow 15 feet long with a distinctive lateral twist to 90 degrees. Crownshafts are incompletely formed and are glossy dark green to black. Trunks are used in house construction and young fruit is eaten.

My first glance of *Neoveitchia storkii* was approximately 20 years ago. The South Florida Chapter of the International Palm Society sponsored a garden tour on Key Biscayne. We toured a high-rise condo community which was completely landscaped with rare palms. The most memorable palm on that tour was *Neoveitchia storkii*. It was nestled in a protected area between several buildings. It was a stunning pinnate palm which looked too exotic and tropical to grow on the mainland. It was 25 feet tall with a jet black crownshaft and long fronds with a distinctive 90 degree twist on the end. The leaflets were wide and bright green.

I discovered that *Neoveitchia storkii* can be grown in Palm Beach County. I purchased and planted my first *Neoveitchia* 15 years ago. It now has an eight inch diameter trunk, seven feet of clear wood, 10 foot long fronds, and a jet black crownshaft. I also planted one eight years ago which has developed three feet of wood.

I have never noticed any damage from the cold since 1994. Literature suggests that this palm is hearty to Zone 10. My experience has shown that this palm is not sensitive to periodic inundation and actually prefers moist soils. They adapt to full sun at an early age. These palms are very hurricane resistant.

I put *Neoveitchia storkii* in my top five pinnate palm list. Its graceful tropical appearance combined with the black crownshaft make it a standout specimen.



Crownshaft



Leaf Detail



4 Year Old



8 Year Old