



# Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

*Affiliate of the International Palm Society*

Monthly Update

August 2010

## FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Livistona saribus*



*Livistona saribus* growing  
in John Kennedy's garden  
in Vero Beach.  
(Photo by John Kennedy)



*Livistona saribus* petiole  
(Photo by John Kennedy)

FRONT COVER: *Livistona saribus* growing in Dale Holton's garden.

(Photo by Charlie Beck)

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**FEATURED THIS MONTH: Taraw Palm**

**(*Livistona saribus*): Tough and Hardy**

*by John Kennedy*

After a near-death (?) freeze experience, many palm collectors decide—for a while, anyway—to be sensible, to plant only species that won't be damaged or killed in cold snaps. Of course, 'cold snap' may be too mild a term for my experience of last winter: nine nights below freezing in January and February. Mostly this was no lower than 30° for an hour or two, but once to 27°. One night was 10 hours below freezing; daytime temperatures seldom got above the 50s for most of two months.

I do recommend, as an undamaged survivor for more than 25 years, *Livistona saribus*, the Taraw Palm.

In the 1980s, every winter in Vero brought as many as three or four freezes, with temperatures as low as 26°, at least briefly. The most memorable cold was on Christmas Eve night—actually, Christmas morning—in 1989, when the temperature plunged to 18° at my house, rose that day to maybe 40° after 12 hours below freezing. Christmas night dipped again, but only into (I

think) the upper 20s. Warmth, meaning 70°, didn't return for four days, though successive nights were in the 40s. Do understand that my memories—except of that single horrifying 18°--remain mercifully murky and blocked. It was helpful that there were no further freezes later in the winter.

For a month, the prevailing odor in Vero Beach was of rotting vegetation. Huge piles of dead and decaying bougainvillea, crotons, ixora, hibiscus, etc., royal and coconut palms (farthest north for these on the coast). Christmas Palms, *Adonidia*, disappeared from almost every lawn, only to return a few years ago: most residents have been here no longer than 5-6 years, so have no historic memory of the Christmas 1989 horrors.

I had planted in my back yard in 1982, a 1-gallon *Livistona saribus* purchased from a vendor at the Fair-child sale. I was a novice in palms, only about two years, knew next to nothing. The little palm was planted in the open, no cover, had grown to three feet high when that 18° arrived, seven years later. To my amazement and relief, it had no damage whatsoever, covered only with a pillow case.

This kind of cold hardiness is nothing short of amazing in a coastal-plain palm native to

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**Village Marina**

**464-4391**

**Wes Taylor**

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Southeast Asia—Malaya, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam. It has continued to grow, is now 40 feet tall, with an 18-inch trunk, and, at a glance, might be taken for a medium size *Washingtonia*. It was completely untouched by last winter's freezing temperatures and lengthy overall chilliness.

The bright green deeply costapalmate 3-foot leaves seem longer than wide, and droop more than half the segment length. Growth is moderate, with good response to palm fertilizer. Nice looking, yes, but no outstanding showy features aside from the downward-pointing, elaborate spines on the 5-foot petioles. These look to me like a Javanese *kris*, to others like shark's teeth, with a wide base and curved long point. But mustn't forget the fruit, a striking metallic blue, thin over a large seed; the squirrels eat the fruit covering, dropping the cleaned seeds on the ground.

There is a form of the Taraw Palm with reddish petioles, very decorative, but apparently not as cold hardy as the more familiar form (mine) with green petioles.

I have often recommended *Livistona saribus* as a substitute for *Washingtonia*. It is readily available but doesn't grow out of proportion to its surroundings. Think of all those 4-story *Washingtonia*



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palms with skinny trunks and tiny crowns (dustmops), next to a flat-roofed Florida house! Taraw Palm has a thicker trunk and a bigger crown: mine now 18 feet across. Dead leaves don't drop off *L. saribus* immediately, so require the attention of those neatly inclined, but are more reachable than a *Washingtonia* palm. They do fall eventually, and the few hanging down don't look as messy as on a *Washingtonia*.

My experience has been that the leaf bases remain on the palm until it is about 15 years old, adding to trunk dimensions, then (magically?) some signal is given and they all begin to come off, revealing a grayish brown trunk marked with leaf scars.

What did I do right, unknowingly, with this palm? My policy of benign neglect worked out (in this instance). Where I planted it was a low point in my backyard, which is the low point for the entire block of half-acre lots, four on 13<sup>th</sup> Street (my unpaved street) and four on

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*Please share your garden experiences.  
Submit your stories and photos to beck4212@aol.com*

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12<sup>th</sup> Place to the south (another unpaved street). After a hard rain there is often several inches of water in the back for a day or two and, of course, the water table isn't all that far down anyway. The little Taraw Palm didn't remain in the open for long before the smallish laurel oak on the neighbor's property behind became a large laurel oak, shading it out. At the same time, the tree provided some cover to keep the dampness maybe a bit longer than before.

The palm began to lean outward to escape the shade; the tree grew even bigger. However, the palm won when the tree was trashed in the two 2004 hurricanes that hit Vero Beach. With the cover removed, the palm zoomed up and, now, with the tree fully recovered, remains above it.

Volunteers have appeared all around; several I've left where they are, not quite adult leaves, not quite a trunk yet. Small, two-leaf seedlings I have often pulled up, prior to my retirement, and put into plastic cups—names written on the side—to hand out as freebies to my community-college students. But that's another story.

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**CORRECTION:** In the July Monthly Update article "Dr. John D. Kennedy Addresses Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society," it was stated that Dr. Kennedy recommended a list of palms contained in his slide presentation. However, Dr. Kennedy's handout included the following palms that he recommends for the Treasure Coast:

- *Acoelorrhaphe wrightii* (native)
- *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*
- *Arenga engleri*
- *Bismarckia nobilis*
- *Butia capitata*
- *Caryota mitis*
- *Chamaerops humilis*
- *Livistona chinensis*
- *Livistona decora* [*decipiens*]
- *Rhaphidophyllum hystrix*
- *Rhapis excelsa*
- *Sabal palmetto* (native)
- *Serenoa repens* (native)
- *Waodyetia bifurcata*

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# UPCOMING MEETINGS

## GENERAL MEETING

**Date:** Wednesday, August 4, 2010  
**Time:** 7:30 p.m.  
**Location:** Mounts Botanical Garden  
**Subject:** Jeff Marcus Garden Tour Slide Presentation (Part I)

## EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

**Date:** Wednesday, August 25, 2010  
**Time:** 7:00 p.m.  
**Location:** Mounts Botanical Garden

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# This Month's "Thank You"

## General Membership Meeting Refreshments

Charlie & Brenda Beck  
Patt Lindsey  
Ruth Lynch  
Lauren & Patrick Morris

Shawna Price  
John & Nancy Varney  
Linda Wiringer

## Plant Donations

Betty Ahlborn  
Jack Dewey

Dale Holton  
John Irvine

## Special Thanks

to

**Dennis McKee**

for arriving at 5:00 p.m. to keep the Mounts building open for us.

Winners of the July 7th Name Drawing Prize were  
**Lew & Kathy Berger**  
who received a M. Ensinosa numbered print  
of a *Pseudophoenix ekmanii*.

(561) 586-2332



LAKE OSBORNE ANIMAL CLINIC

JOHN T. LYNCH, D.V.M.

1502 Lake Osborne Dr.  
Lake Worth, FL 33461

## INVASIVE NON-NATIVE SPECIES PRESENTATION

by Brenda Beck

Kristina Serbesoff-King, Invasive Species Program Manager at Nature Conservancy, was the guest speaker at the July 7<sup>th</sup> general membership meeting.

Kristina talked about how Nature Conservancy is working with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and other agencies to address invasive non-native species. Attempts are being made to prevent future problems with invasive plants by performing a risk assessment of plants, conducting pre-import screening, and using predictive tools to determine if a plant may become invasive.

To be considered an invasive plant, the plant:

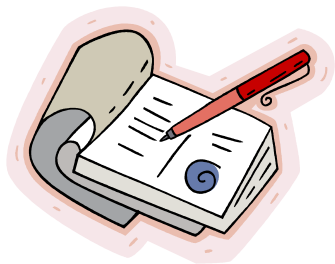
- must grow fast and produce lots of seeds
- has moved beyond the influence of insects and diseases from the plant's land of origin
- competes with native plants for nutrients, water, sunlight, and space
- adversely affects native wildlife and natural communities

According to the Florida Exotic Plant Council, *Livistona chinensis* (Chinese fan palm), *Phoenix reclinata* (Senegal date palm), *Syagrus romanzoffiana* (Queen Palm), and *Washingtonia robusta* (Washington fan palm) are considered Category II invasive exotics.

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## MARK YOUR CALENDAR! PALM BEACH PALM & CYCAD SOCIETY FALL PLANT SALE



October 9th & 10th  
At Caloosa Park

More details to follow



Fifteen foot high *Livistona saribus* with leaf bases growing in Mike Dahme's garden in Grant, Brevard County.

(Photo by John Kennedy)

***Zamia vazquezii***  
by Dale Holton

*Zamia vazquezii* is found in wet lowland forest in deep shade, at elevations of around 2,000 ft. These plants are found in Mexico in the states of Hidalgo, San Luis Potosi and Veracruz. This *Zamia* is named in honor of Mario Vazquez Torres. In the past, this plant was falsely called *Zamia fischerii*, which it resembles.

*Zamia vazquezii* is a very attractive plant and is very easy to grow. It can be grown in shade or full sun, but looks best when grown in some shade. It comes in two forms, one with green emergent leaves and the other with bronze emergent leaves. The two forms can only be identified when new leaves are present. Well grown plants can have many leaves that can be two to three feet

tall. In containers, they usually lose their leaves in the winter, but in the ground this usually does not occur. At my house, the plants have never been affected by cold. I usually defoliate my plants in the early spring as they tend to get scale and mealy bug during the dry months. Defoliating the plants also causes them to make a new full head of leaves. When you don't defoliate them, they tend to get too many leaves and new leaves have a difficult time getting through the old leaves.



***Zamia vazquezii* growing in the Holton garden.**  
(Photo by Charlie Beck)

These plants are not rare in cultivation and can be found in some specialty nurseries at very reasonable prices. They are easy to propagate from seed. The local pollinators sometimes pollinate them.

I believe these *Zamias* are under utilized in landscape plantings. These plants look nice as borders and in clumps and each year the plants get slightly larger.

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