



Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

Affiliate of the International Palm Society

Monthly Update

July 2011

FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Syagrus glaucescens*



ABOVE: Distinctive leaf base pattern of *Syagrus glaucescens*

BELOW: *Syagrus glaucescens* leaf detail

(Photos by Charlie Beck)



FRONT COVER: *Syagrus glaucescens* growing in the Beck garden.

(Photo by Charlie Beck)

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Featured this Month: *Syagrus glaucescens*
 by Charlie Beck

Syagrus glaucescens is a small, solitary palm native to a restricted area of eastern Brazil. It grows at 2,200 to 4,000 foot elevation in dry, rocky terrain. This habitat is located just inside the tropics. This palm's stem grows three to five inches in diameter and can grow 15 feet tall. The three foot leaves are plumose with stiff upward pointing leaflets. The leaflets are usually silver but occasionally emerge green. The leaf bases are persistent and closely spaced in five distinct rows similar to the much larger palm *Syagrus coronata*.

Syagrus glaucescens is truly a collector's palm. I've never seen this palm growing in South Florida outside of our garden. Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden reports having a single specimen. I've been told by Dr. Larry Noblick that Montgomery

Botanical Center does have a collection of this rare palm.

We were lucky to obtain our specimen years ago from Paul Craft. It basically was a sprouted seed at that time. In 1994, I planted our specimen in full sun in an area that rarely floods. At that time, I did not know what to expect of this palm. None of the books available in 1994 listed this palm. In 1995, "Field Guide to the Palms of the Americas" listed the palm but no photograph was available. In 2003, a photograph of *Syagrus glaucescens* in habitat taken by Paul Craft was included in "An Encyclopedia of Cultivated Palms." (See plates 846 and 847 if you have access to this book.)

Our 17 year old specimen has a 12 inch tall stem. The leaves measure three feet long. It has been pro-

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GROWING CONDITIONS IN OUR GARDEN FOR <i>Syagrus glaucescens</i>	
Location	4 miles from ocean in suburban Lantana
Soil	Sandy soil
Irrigation	¾ inch applied twice a week
Fertilization	4 times a year with Palm special analysis
Light	Full sun
Micronutrient Deficiencies	None
Insect Damage	None observed
Cold Hardiness	No damage observed (2009 through 2011)
Hurricane Resistance	Excellent

Zamia pumila
by Dale Holton

Zamia pumila is one of the more popular Caribbean *Zamia*'s. It is described as being endemic to Hispaniola, although I have encountered it on the Isle of Pines off of the southwestern coast of Cuba. There also was a locality on the north coast of Cuba just east of Havana where it was reportedly growing. There is a plant just to the north of Camaguy, near the town of Neuviatas, that looks very similar to *Zamia pumila*.

Carl Linnaeus described the Genus and species in 1763. The name is derived from Pumilus, latin for dwarf or short. I first saw them in habitat in June 1996, while on a PBPCS tour of the Dominican Republic. They were growing on the beach, under coconut palms. They were surrounded by all of the normal garbage that you would expect to find washed ashore. During bad storms, the salt water had to be washing over them. The plants that I saw on the Isle of Pines were growing under the same conditions. I suspect that during hurricanes, seeds get washed out to sea and sometimes end up on other islands. The plants near Neuviatas were growing away from the shore line but very near to the coast.



Zamia pumila growing on the Isle of Pines in Cuba.
(Photo by Dale Holton)

This *Zamia* is very fast growing and could go from seed to coning size plants in 3-4 years. I have seen them used as landscape plants in commercial areas in Broward County. I have a hedge of them along both sides of my driveway. They thrive on a lack of attention. Mine get watered when it rains. In

the late winter, they do have problems with mealy bugs and scale, which cause black sooty mold. I usually cut all of the leaves off of them in April. It usually takes about a month for them to get new leaves again. This also keeps the plants lower, as the next new leaves don't have to fight their way through a tangle of several older growths of leaves to get to the light. These plants will grow equally well in shade or full sun. I

have found that they go through the winters around here very well. They will produce some seed on their own, but for good seed production, I have to hand pollinate them.

The original inhabitants of Hispaniola, Taino Indians, used the plants for food. According to Whitelocks book, they ground the tubers and made a paste out of them, which

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

GENERAL MEETING

- Date:** Wednesday, July 6, 2011
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Location: Mounts Botanical Garden
Speaker: Tom Whisler
Subject: Tom & Dale's Great Adventure in Belize

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

- Date:** Wednesday, July 27, 2011
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Location: Ruth Sallenbach's Home
6285 S. Military Trail, Lake Worth
(561) 965-5430

Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society Membership

Be sure to keep your membership up to date. It will insure that you receive all Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society communications. Annual membership is \$25 per person per year and membership runs from January 1 to December 31. Membership can be renewed by sending payments to the Society at P.O. Box 21-2228, Royal Palm Beach, FL 33421.

Thank you for your support of the Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society. We hope to see you at all of our general meetings which take place on the first Wednesday of every month at Mounts Botanical Garden in West Palm Beach. Be sure to watch for information regarding our field trips, special activities, and palm and cycad shows and sales.

If you have questions about membership, you can contact Tom Whisler, our Membership Chairman, at whisler.tom@synthes.com



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Kevin Thomas
Jonathon Andrews
Mark Blanchette
Adrienne Deutsch

(Syagrus glaucescens continued from page 4)

ducing seeds for several years. Its flowers are unusually large and have a creamy yellow color. Sometimes fronds emerge silver just like a *Bismarckia* but other times the waxy leaf coat is reduced and the fronds are greener. The leaf bases are closely spaced and are quite attractive with five distinct rows. This palm will be a real show stopper once it grows a little taller. I plan to propagate this palm and make it available at our Society's auctions.

This palm was unaffected by our past record cold winters. It has never shown any nutritional deficiencies. It is a slow but steady grower.

Plant this "collector" palm if you can find it. Its small size will fit into any garden. It requires full sun and will reward you with stiff silver leaflets and a stem with a very interesting leaf base pattern.

(Zamia pumila continued from page 5)



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they wrapped in leaves, and then let them sit for several days until they turned black and got worms in them. Then they made tortillas out of them, worms and all. You got your protean and starch all in one.

(See additional photo on page 11)

THIS MONTH'S "THANK YOU"

PLANT DONATIONS

Charlie Beck
Don Bittel
Dale Holton

MEETING REFRESHMENTS

Charlie Beck
Ruth Lynch
Sue Pepler
Tom Ramiccio
Linda & Ron Wiringer

JUNE DOOR PRIZE WINNERS

Jim Gallagher - won a Palm Disease Identification Guide
Mick Pepler - won a M. Spinosa numbered print of a *Pseudophoenix ekmanii*.

SPECIAL THANKS

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

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

Great Find Sharpener

by Charlie Beck

Pruning shears cut much better when razor sharp. Much less effort is required to finish the cut. It's best to check your by-pass pruner for sharpness on a regular basis. You can avoid trips back to the tool shed for larger shears if the smaller pruner in hand is sharp enough to complete the cut. A sharp lopping shear can cut through items that would otherwise require cutting with a hand saw.

Over the years I've tried many different methods of sharpening my pruners. I've tried sharpening stones and diamond impregnated blocks. These abrasive blocks are usually too wide to sharpen the pruning blade while still assembled. It's also difficult to maintain the proper angle while drawing the abrasive block along the curved pruning blade. These methods remove so little metal at a time that sharpening can take quite a bit of time. Electric grinding wheels work but they remove too much metal from the blade and also require disassembly of the pruner for access to the cutting edge.

A better method I have found is using a narrow metal file. The one I use is only 1/4 inch wide so access to the cutting edge can be achieved while the pruner is still assembled. This method works well but it takes some practice to maintain the proper bevel angle of the cutting edge. This method saves all of the time spent disassembling and reassembling the pruner.

My latest find is a tool made especially for sharpening pruners. It's less than four inches long and has a cross-section of a carpenter's pencil. The sharpening edge is a carbide insert with very sharp edges. It's small enough to access the full length of the pruner edge. To sharpen the blade you simply pull the carbide edge along the



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(Great Find Sharpener continued from page 9)

pruner's cutting edge. Very little pressure is required. In two passes your pruner is sharp. The sharpener weighs one ounce and is small enough to store in your work belt so you can sharpen your pruner whenever required. This sharpener has a five year warranty. I ordered my Istar sharpener on-line from Gempler's for approximately \$15 but I have noticed that Amazon sells a similar Corona model for less than \$10. Give this sharpener a try. It's a real time saver.



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Syagrus glaucescens inflorescence
(Photo by Charlie Beck)



Zamia pumila growing on the Isle of Pines in Cuba.
(Photo by Dale Holton)



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Syagrus glaucescens
infructescence
(Photo by Charlie Beck)