



Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

Affiliate of the International Palm Society

Monthly Update

January 2012

FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Coccothrinax crinita*



FRONT COVER AND ABOVE: *Coccothrinax crinita subspecies crinita* with long, pendulous fibers (Old Man Palm) growing in the Beck garden.
(Photos by Charlie Beck)

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VISIT US AT palmbeachpalmcycadsociety.com

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Featured this Month: *Coccothrinax crinita*

by Charlie Beck

Coccothrinax crinita is a solitary, medium-sized, palmate palm. Maximum height is reported to be 30 feet but the tallest specimens at Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden range to 20 feet. The most distinguishing feature of this palm is the closely woven, pendulous fibers which cover the stem. Its common name is “old man palm” due to the shaggy beard. These fibers persist for many years even though with

great age the lower fibers may release from the stem. There are two subspecies: *crinita* is the palm with long distinctive fibers and is native to western Cuba and *brevicrinis* has much shorter fibers and is found in central Cuba.

Coccothrinax crinita is reported to be rare in Cuba, persisting only in cleared fields and pastures where they do not reproduce. Historical habitat ranges from sea level to 1,000 feet. It is reported that *C. crinita* grows in two distinct habitats. One is low lying seasonally flooded savannas and the other hilly areas on serpentine soils.

Coccothrinax crinita is not rare in South Florida botanical gardens. Fairchild has dozens of 50+ year old specimens displayed. Even Mounts Botanical Garden had *C. crinita* growing in their palm garden. Well grown specimens of *C. crinita* are not as common in private gardens. If you read the description of this palm’s native habitat you would think it was perfectly suited for growing in Palm Beach County. Seasonally flooded savannas in Cuba sounds a lot like our native pine flatwood habitat here in Palm Beach County. Our garden occasionally floods so I thought it was a good match for this palm’s native habitat. All of the *C. crinita* I planted quickly suc-

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Coccothrinax crinita subspecies *brevicrinis* with short fibers on the stem.

(Photo by Charlie Beck)

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cumbed. Next, I tried planting *C. crinita* on mounds of native sand. These palms also declined and died. In 1999, we brought truck loads of fill to establish a 3 foot high grade for building our house. Much of this fill was shell rock because it packed better than sand. *C. crinita* loves growing in this area. Our oldest specimen grew 9 1/2 feet tall (overall) in 12 years. It is very healthy. If you want to grow this palm in your garden, I recommend mounding the soil with a 50/50 mix of our native sand and pea gravel. I've done this with some alkaline loving plants with success and I think *C. crinita* would thrive in this mix. Another idea would be to plant a *C. crinita* in a hollowed out hole in a block of shell rock. Years ago a vendor at a Fair-child palm sale displayed healthy *C. crinita* grown in this manner. Of course you would need heavy equipment to place this shell rock block in

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your garden but these palms will thrive planted this way. Coral Castle, a tourist attraction in Homestead had *C. crinita* and *C. argentata* specimens growing on the castle walls and they looked very healthy.

There is much genetic diversity within a palm species. I have seen *C. crinita* growing in private gardens without any soil amendment but mounding with a pea gravel/sand mixture will probably improve your success and growth rate of this desirable palm.

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 for an individual membership and \$35 for a dual membership (two people living at the same address) 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

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Date:** Wednesday, January 4, 2012
- Location:** Mounts Botanical Garden
- Time:** 6:00 p.m.—Palm Society Board Meeting
- Time:** 7:30 p.m.—General Meeting
- Speaker:** Scott Zona
- Subject:** An Introduction to Palms (and a Peek into the Future)

Mrs. Elizabeth Ann Moody February 24, 1922 – November 28, 2011

Long time Palm Society member Ann Moody died at the age of 89 on November 28th.

Ann was born in Frankfort, Kentucky. She earned a bachelor's degree at Transylvania University in Lexington and attended Yale Divinity School for two years. In 1940, Ann became the first woman in Lexington to earn a pilot's license.

Ann married Norm in 1948 and had three sons, Dale, Evan (deceased), and Glenn. They also have two granddaughters and one great grandson.

During their 62 year marriage, they traveled to Israel and worked with the American Friends Service Committee. They also traveled extensively with the International Palm Society and were active with the Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society.

While living in West Palm Beach, Ann was instrumental in starting the Domestic Assault Program where she worked for many years. She enjoyed sculpting and working with clay and many of her pieces were prominently displayed in their palm garden in West Palm Beach.

Ann will be missed by those who knew her and loved her.



Boron Deficiency by Charlie Beck

University of Florida recommends fertilizing palms every three months with a slow release palm special fertilizer with minors. For most palms this schedule is sufficient for nutritional requirements. There are some palms which suffer from nutritional deficiencies even though fertilized at the recommended rate and schedule.

Boron deficiency can be lethal to palms. Boron deficiency symptoms on most palms are displayed by a curve at the growing point. New growth turns sideways and becomes stunted. According to the University of Florida, boron supply in our soil is usually adequate.

Sometimes the palm is unable to absorb this nutrient (cold temperatures) or heavy rains and flooding can wash away the supply of boron from the palm root zone.

I noticed two of three of our *Bentinckia nicobarica* stunted from our past record cold winters. I thought it was due to the low temperatures and thought the palms would recover during the growing season. One of these palms started to grow horizontally which is a symptom of boron deficiency. The cold temperatures probably caused a reduced uptake of boron. I did not recognize this early enough to save

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A Message from your Membership Chairman

Another growing season is passing, the New Year is upon us, and there are a lot of great things ahead of us at the Palm Beach Palm and Cycad Society. I'm working on a couple of group trips and a lot of things are in the works for this next year.

This time of year also means that membership dues are due in January. If you're not sure about your membership status you can check with Mary or me at the meeting or call us at (561) 627-8328. You can e-mail us at mjw748@yahoo.com (put membership in the subject line). Please fill out the membership form included in this newsletter and send it with your payment to the address shown on the application or bring the renewal form with cash or check to the next meeting. One thing that has changed for the 2012 membership is that we now offer a dual household membership for \$35.00. This membership is for any two people that live at the same address. With a dual membership, the household will only receive one newsletter per month, but the dual membership will offer all the benefits of two memberships; this will include two chances at the great Christmas palm give-away.

Tom Whisler, Membership Chairman

2011 Holiday Party Memories



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More 2011 Holiday Party Memories



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Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

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2012 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND RENEWAL (PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Home Telephone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

\$25—Individual Membership

\$35—Dual Membership (two individuals living at the same address)

Please send the annual Individual Membership Fee OR Dual Membership Fee to:

Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society
 P.O. Box 21-2228
 Royal Palm Beach, FL 33421
 Attn: Membership Chairman

Membership runs from January 1 through December 31. Membership includes one monthly newsletter and receipt of free palms, cycads, and other plants at the annual plant give-away in December.

FOR PALM SOCIETY USE ONLY				
\$		Check No.		Year

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one of the three palms but have applied boron and expect the other specimens will survive.

University of Florida recommends dissolving two to four ounces of Borax into five gallons of water and applying evenly to the root zone. Be careful not to exceed the recommended amounts because over-application of boron is toxic to palms. Reapply boron solution at five month intervals until the deficiency is cured. 20 Mule Team Bo-

rax is readily available in the laundry section of the grocery store.

Another product I have used to cure this deficiency is boric acid. It is available in the pesticide section in the hardware store. It comes in a puffer squeeze bottle. A light application of this product around the palm has worked for me in the past. Three or four puffs of this product should work. This product is 99 percent pure boric acid so do not over-apply. (See photos on page 11.)

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Bentinckia nicobarica with advanced boron deficiency.



Syagrus coronata hybrid showing signs of recovery from boron deficiency



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Coconut palm is happy home for raccoon family.

Happy New Year!

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