



FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Wallichia disticha*



Wallichia disticha topside and underside leaf.



Wallichia disticha stem.



Wallichia disticha at the
Townsville Palmetum in Australia.
(Photo posted on PACSOA website and
contributed by John L. Dowe
from *Palms and Cycads*
No. 36, July-Sept 1992)

FRONT COVER: *Wallichia disticha* in the Beck garden.
(Photo by Charlie Beck)

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Featured this Month: *Wallichia disticha*

by Charlie Beck

Wallichia disticha is a medium size, solitary palm native to Bangladesh, China, East Himalaya and Thailand. It grows in lowland to montane forest at elevations of 1,500 – 2,500 feet. Its native habitat is considered moist to wet and it is reported to grow to 30 feet tall in habitat.

This is a pinnate, monoecious palm and is monocarpic (dies after flowering). The typical lifespan of this palm is 15 years – at that time frond production ceases and flowering commences and continues for approximately two years. The fruit contains corrosive oxalic acid crystals which may irritate your skin if handled without gloves.

This palm has both distinctive and attractive features. The most distinctive feature is the frond growth pattern. Its fronds grow in a single plane arranged alternately on either side of the stem. This growth pattern is technically called distichous. The stem is covered in persistent coarse black fibers which add to the beauty of this palm. Leaflets have jaggedly toothed margins and tips, similar to *Arenga*. The leaflets are green above and are silver below. Leaflets are irregularly arranged and distinctly fanned in bundled groups of 2 – 4.

Our original planting of three *W. disticha* grew vigorously but due to its monocarpic habit succumbed in 8 years without produc-

ing fruit. Ten years ago we planted three more specimens of *W. disticha*. These palms are still growing vigorously. They range 15 – 20 feet tall in overall height. The fronds can measure up to 13 feet long. Three quarters of the stem is covered with healthy green fronds. Stems measure 9 – 10 inches in diameter. I believe these palms look best if planted by themselves so that the distichous arrangement of fronds can be readily recognized. These palms would be perfect to plant beside a wall. Our specimens held their growth orientation of the fronds even from an early age.

Even though these palms are from high altitudes, their native habitat is still a tropical climate. Many of the reference books suggest growing this palm in only the warmest sub-tropical areas. I have observed no stunting or burning of these palms due to cold over the last 19 years. I submit that these palms do have a higher degree of cold hardiness than what reference books state. Our specimens are grown in partial shade but I've seen specimens growing beautifully in full shade and I think they would also grow well in full sun. I've never noticed any nutritional deficiency on our *W. disticha* specimens.

Grow this palm for its distinctive distichous growth pattern. The clustered, jagged leaflets and the

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Consider Using Dolomite in Certain Situations

by Charlie Beck

Soils are commonly acidic in northeast portions of the country. We regularly applied dolomitic limestone to neutralize our soil. In South Florida, we don't typically have acidic soils so a yearly application of dolomite is not generally recommended. The sandy soil in our garden in Palm Beach County usually measures close to neutral 7.0 but the PH of our well water measures a higher PH of 7.8, which is alkaline. In the Miami area, soils are a limestone base and are highly alkaline. Therefore, many palms that grow well in Miami can struggle in Palm Beach County.

If you have a problem growing a palm here in Palm Beach County and you have seen robust growth of the same palm in Miami, consider applying dolomite. In our garden, we have greatly improved the growth of certain palms and cycads by applying dolomite to the root zone. Examples are stated below.

- *Syagrus botryphora* specimens dwindled and died in our garden. These are fast growing palms in Miami. Dolomite application reversed the decline of our remaining specimen and

transformed it into a healthy fast growing palm.

- *Cycas debaoensis* fronds were stunted and yellowed before a liberal application of dolomite. Frond length tripled and became dark green.
- *Copernicia beteroana* showed chronic magnesium deficiency and slow growth even after repeated magnesium sulfate applications. After an application of dolomite, yellowing of frond tips is greatly reduced and overall appearance is improved.
- *Dioon edule* frond count and general vigor was greatly improved by application of dolomite.

Keep in mind all of these plants were fertilized and irrigated on a regular basis. Overall health was improved by the addition of dolomite.

I am not recommending application of dolomite to most palms and cycads. Dolomite should only be applied to plants that show chronic magnesium deficiency or stunted specimens which grow naturally in

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interesting fibered stem will surely attract admirers. This palm is not commonly available at nurseries but when a seed source is available it can be found.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Date:** Wednesday, March 7, 2012
- Location:** Mounts Botanical Garden
- Time:** 6:00 p.m.—Palm Society Board Meeting
- Time:** 7:30 p.m.—General Meeting
- Speaker:** Dr. Larry Noblick, Palm Biologist at Montgomery Botanical Garden
- Subject:** Easy Ways to identify *Sabal* species

THIS MONTH'S "THANK YOU"

PLANT DONATIONS

Betty Ahlborn
Mike Harris
Steve Garland

MEETING REFRESHMENTS

Lew & Kathy Burger
Ed Napoli
Tom Ramiccio
Teri Scoggins
Kathy & Rod Silverio
Tom & Mary Whisler
Linda Wiringer

JANUARY DOOR PRIZE WINNER

Kathy Burger won "Cycads of Thailand"

SPECIAL THANKS

to

Tom Ramiccio & Roland Grondin

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

February Meeting Recap

by Charlie Beck

Chip Jones presented “A tour of Lorán Whitelock’s Garden” at our February meeting. Lorán Whitelock is a world renowned cycad expert. He authored the book “The Cycads” which I consider the most comprehensive cycad reference book ever published. Lorán’s private garden is located in Los Angeles. Meandering trails cross back and forth on a hillside which encompasses three city lots. Chip has visited this garden on several occasions and was lucky enough to get garden tours led by Lorán himself.

Chip’s presentation included photographs of the Genera *Encephalartos*, *Ceratozamia*, and *Stangeria*. Most of the cycads shown were mature specimens not often

seen in Florida gardens. Chip not only described each species but also explained the difference between named varieties of the same.

Chip has traveled extensively in the tropics seeking out cycads in habitat and has teamed up with our Society’s vice president, Dale Holton on several of these excursions. He explained that when visiting destinations, he has to be careful to notify his hosts that Dale and Chip are coming rather than Chip and Dale so as not to be confused with the Chippendale exotic dancers.

A species list of photos included in his presentation is listed below.

- *Encephalartos arenarius*
- *Encephalartos brevifoliolatus*
- *Encephalartos caffer*
- *Encephalartos cerinus*
- *Encephalartos dolomiticus*
- *Encephalartos dyerianus*
- *Encephalartos eugene-maraisii*
- *Encephalartos heenanii*
- *Encephalartos hirsutus*
- *Encephalartos horridus*
- *Encephalartos inopinus*
- *Encephalartos latifrons*
- *Encephalartos middelburgensis*
- *Encephalartos nubimontanos*
- *Encephalartos whitelockii*
- *Encephalartos woodii*
- *Dioon califanoi*
- *Dioon edule*
- *Ceratozamia euryphyllidia*
- *Ceratozamia zoquorum*
- *Ceratozamia hondoriensis*
- *Dioon rzedowskii*
- *Dioon sonorensis*
- *Stangeria eriopus*



Chip Jones

**Palm Beach Palm
& Cycad Society**

2012 Spring Plant Sale

Saturday, March 31—9 A.M. to 4 P.M.
Sunday, April 1—9 A.M. to 3 P.M.

at Mounts Botanical Garden

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. Please go to www.palmbeachpalmcycadsociety.com to obtain our membership application.

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 (561) 627-8328 or at whisler.tom@synthes.com

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alkaline native soils. If your reference books state that the plant grows in limestone soils in native habitat, then you might want to try an application of dolomite. After one application, it usually takes about six months to see improvement of growth. Thereafter, a single application might be adequate every two to three years. The white powder dolomite and the pelletized dolomite both work well for top dressing the root zone.

Addition of dolomite to potting soils is also recommended. Tim Broschat and Allan Meerow authored a very informative book named "Ornamental Palm Horticulture." This book makes "science based" recommendations for growing palms in pots and in the ground. They recommend using dolomite to adjust soil PH and also to provide **macronutrients of calcium and magnesium**. They state that optimum soil PH for mineral soils is usually between 6.0 and 6.8. In this range, micronutrients such as Mn, Fe, and Zn are adequately soluble.

Potting soils with large amounts of organic material are usually acidic. Broschat and Meerow recommend adding dolomite to organic potting soils at a rate of 8 – 12 pounds of dolomite per cubic yard of soil. This rate translates to 1.6 – 2.5 tablespoons of dolomite per gallon of potting soil or .3 - .5 cups of dolomite per 3 gallons of potting soil.



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Genetic differences between palms of the same species cause varied growth rates. I have identical species growing next to each other with drastically different health and growth. Some palms seem content to remain the same size for very long periods of time. Our oldest *Copernicia baileyana* is only two feet tall after 21 years since planting. We also have 23 foot tall specimens after 19 years of growth. Dolomite might be the right supplement that makes a difference in your palms and cycads.

Don Middlebrooks Garden Tour by Charlie Beck

On February 18, the Bromeliad Society toured Don Middlebrooks' garden in Jupiter. Don is a long term palm and cycad enthusiast and member of our Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society. He began planting palms and cycads in the early 1990s and his garden encompasses several acres. The garden includes both for-

mal and jungle plantings with many towering mature palms and well grown cycads. The garden also contains several water features strategically placed along pathways that added to the calming mood of his garden. I have included a few photos of Don's garden below and on page 11.



Encephalartos gratus in full splendor



Bismarckia nobilis



Attalea cohune—12 years old



Licuala spinosa



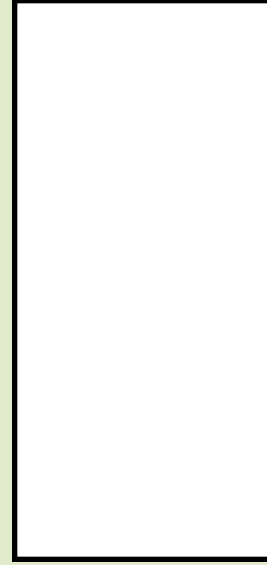
Livistona saribus petioles armed with impressive teeth



Copernicia prunifer—7 years old



Dypsis sp. "mayotte"
attractive stem coloration



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