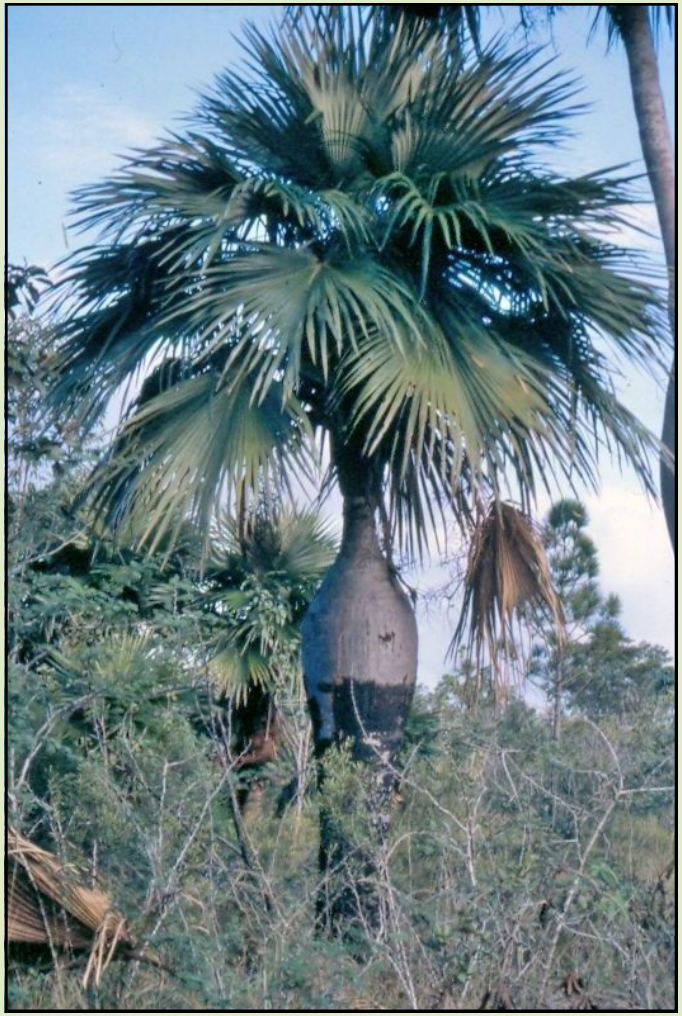
Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

Affiliate of the International Palm Society

Monthly Update January 2013

FEATURED THIS MONTH*: Colpothrinax wrightii*



Colpothrinax wrightii planted in Dale Holton's nursery in Loxahatchee.

FRONT COVER: *Colpothrinax wrightii* growing in habitat in Cuba.

Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society
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NEXT MEETING

January 2, 2013 at 7:30 p.m. at Mounts Botanical Garden

Speakers: Lew & Cathy Burger on the 2010 IPS Biennial to Brazil

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Featured this Month: *Colpothrinax wrightii*

by Dale Holton

Colpothrinax wrightii is a rare palm in cultivation. It is also a very attractive palm. Its habitat is in western Cuba, growing on seasonally flooded woodlands and fields in mostly clay soils. It is also found on the Isle of Youth in coastal fields that are frequently flooded. My first encounter in that location, I thought that I was looking at a very fibrous *Thrinax radiata*. The Cuban people call it the Cuban Belly Palm. However, *Acrocomia crispa* is also called Cuban Belly Palm.

Unfortunately this palm has been very difficult to grow here in Florida, so it is rarely ever encountered. I only know of a couple of people that are successfully growing them. They are a fan leaf palm and have a thick fiber on the trunk when small. They also grow somewhat slowly. Seeds of this palm are fed to hogs in Cuba.

Seeds have been available from time to time. They germinate readily, but start declining after about a year. Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden planted them out several times with no success until they put one in next to one of the ponds. It is now getting quite large.

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Dale Holton's seven remaining experimental *C. wrightii* .

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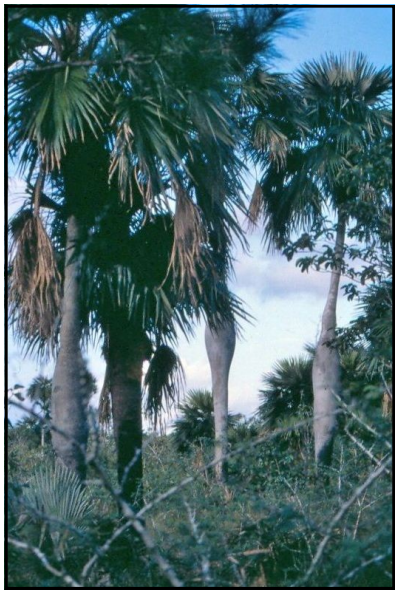
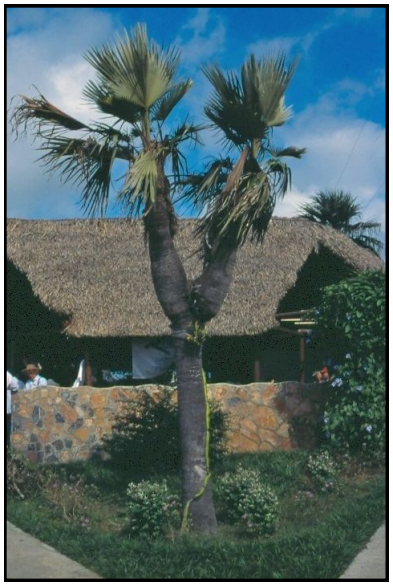
I have four in the ground in Loxahatchee that are doing quite well. They are in the ground next to the pond and in very dense white clay or marl. They do not like freezes. Mine usually look quite bad after every winter, but after a couple of months they have recovered and look very good. I have been experimenting on forty plants that I purchased about three years ago. I now am down to seven plants. Two are potted in Turface MVP. Two are potted in my regular potting soil in pots that retain about one and one-half inches of water. Those plants are all doing very good. It is quite obvious that they need lots of water and prefer a clay based soil.

(All photos for this article were provided by Dale Holton.)

LEFT: *C. wrightii* growing in Havana Botanical Garden.

BELOW: *C. wrightii* growing in habitat and an unusual double-stemmed specimen at a residence in Cuba .





New Data on IMIDACLOPRID

by Charlie Beck

Earlier this year our palm society had two meetings which discussed the spiral whitefly. At these meetings use of imidacloprid was recommended for control of this insect. No mention was made of the negative effects to the environment when using this chemical control.

A recent report from the University of Minnesota College of Food, Agriculture and Natural Resource Sciences states that household insecticide, imidacloprid, may play a role in declining bee populations. Imidacloprid is marketed to home gardeners under the names Merit, Marathon, Bayer Advanced Flower and Shrub, Bayer Tree and Shrub Protect, Bayer Complete Insect Killer for Turf. When applied to the field or garden, the chemicals are absorbed through the plants vascular system which makes the entire plant toxic to insects. The chemicals are also absorbed into the nectar and pollen of the plants. The toxic effects to bees and other beneficial insects can last for several months to years in pollen and nectar from just one application. Less-than-lethal exposures can cause honeybees to have problems flying and finding their way back to the hive, lose their sense of taste and have more difficulty learning new tasks, according to a group of scientists called the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, who summarized some of the existing research on bees and imidacloprid this year. Lab research has shown that four species of lady beetles, a parasitic wasp, a predatory green lacewing and bumblebees all die at the standard application rate of imidacloprid.

Early this year, beekeepers from Minnesota and California petitioned the Environmental Protection Agency to immediately suspend sales of neonicotinoid insecticides including imidacloprid, but in July the EPA denied the request and said it will review the insecticides' effects, a process that could take until 2018.

Not only can imidacloprid cause damage to beneficial predatory insects but also can have negative effects on butterflies and hummingbirds which feed on nectar and pollen. I have observed hummingbirds feeding on palm flower nectar

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All Purpose Bug Spray Recipe

In two gallons of water, mix in two tablespoons of each: vinegar, canola oil and Murphy's Oil Soap; along with three tablespoons of baking soda.

Combine these ingredients in a handheld sprayer and mist your plants until they are dripping wet. Spraying is best done in the early evening to avoid burning leaves.

A Successful Courtyard Planting for Wildlife Viewing

by Charlie Beck

I'm more of a plant collector than a garden landscaper. I try to keep basic landscape design rules in mind when planting gardens but at the same time I usually succumb to the urge to plant one of everything. For quite some time I've been planting our garden with wildlife in mind. Aside from planting palms, cycads, cordylines, and crotons of which I am particularly fond, the first question I ask is "what benefit does this plant provide for wildlife?" Birds, butterflies, moths, spiders, lizards, etc. can add a lot of interest to the garden, if you take the time to silently observe the interactions of nature.

We poured a 12x12' concrete pad for a spa behind the house. Around this pad I planted an assortment of plants which would attract wildlife for viewing. I broke all of the basic laws of landscaping. There was practically no repetition. Upon initial view, nobody would say that this collection of plants was visually stunning. Many of the plants were replaced over time until the right mix was found. I try to spend at least an hour every day enjoying this area. If you are patient, you can see a whole assortment of wildlife activity unfolding. This planting would also be effective as a townhouse, courtyard planting even without a spa placed in the center.

I first planted three *Kentiopsis oliviformis* palms to anchor the planting and to provide high visual interest. Even though these palms are not great for wildlife they do provide a vantage point for lizards to hunt insects. I then planted a row of Firespike on the west side. Firespike is not native to Florida but is still one of the best hummingbird attractors. This Firespike is the red variety which blooms most of the year. It is quite attractive with its clusters of blood red, tubular flowers displayed 5-6' above the ground.

On the southwest corner I planted a native Firebush. This plant also displays orange-red tubular flowers. It can grow up to 12' tall if never pruned. When it does grow to this height it creates an area for under planting. Firebush flowers attract hummingbirds and practically every butterfly that is native to our area. Firebush also produces a copious amount of fruit which is sought out by many of our fruit eating birds. Some of our native birds nest in firebush. Next to the firebush I planted a red mussaenda. The flowers on the mussaenda are white but the bracts

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(especially coconut flowers). I urge our members to consider this new information before applying this insecticide to their garden. Remember spiral whitefly is not lethal to plants and can easily be discouraged with a strong stream of water or an organic oil/soap solution. Encouraging native predatory insects is preferable to killing them by the use of imidacloprid.

Complete article can be viewed at:
http://www.cfans.umn.edu/Solutions/Fall2012/Killer_Bottle/index.htm.

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are red and very showy. Hummingbirds and butterflies sip nectar from these flowers. Mussaendas are sprawling plants which need to be cut back hard from time to time. This sprawling habit does fill in the understory of the firebush and also the *Phoenix sylvestris* planted beside it. This combination of an upright firebush with a sprawling mussaenda creates a great place for insect eating birds to forage. There are always birds present in this cluster planting. Cardinals, catbirds, and mockingbirds eat the Firebush fruit and assorted warblers and Gnat Catchers seek insects in the thicket. A native Varnish Leaf was also planted in this area for the mussaenda to climb. A *Phoenix sylvestris* grows on the southeast corner. It has 6-7' of stem and the birds have planted native coffee plants beneath. Native coffee is an understory plant which attracts butterflies and other insects to the flowers and also produces beautiful maroon fruit which the birds love to eat.

The next plant on the southeast corner is a native Fiddlewood tree. This tree tops out at 10-12' tall. It produces pendulous racemes of fragrant white flowers which attract many pollinators and other nectar seeking insects. There is a native moth whose larvae completely defoliate the fiddlewood. The tree puts out a new flush of leaves in response to the caterpillar feast. Of course these caterpillars are a food source for insect eating birds and also other nesting birds like Cardinals who feed their young the caterpillars.

Next to the Fiddlewood is the native Jamaica Caper. This plant has very showy fragrant flowers

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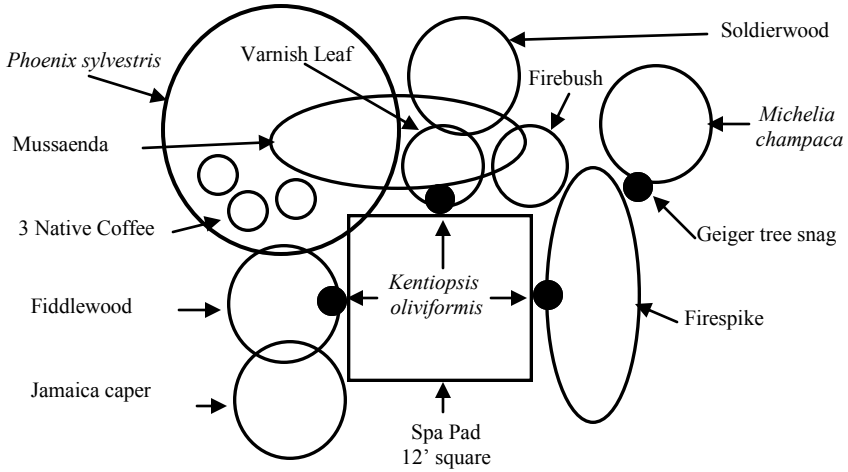
which attract butterflies. The flowers are white with extremely long stamens. The fruit is formed in capsules which spring open to reveal an orange interior. This plant also serves as a host to the Florida White butterfly. To add interest I allowed a few strands of the non-native Mexican Flamevine to grow up to the top of the Jamaica Caper. This vine has orange daisy-like flowers which draw in many butterflies -especially Zebra (longwing) Heliconian.

In the background I have planted a native Soldierwood tree which is reported to be one of the best trees for attracting birds. Another background tree is *Michelia champaca*. This tree is reported to draw many insects when in flower. Both of these trees were recently planted and are just showing above the foreground planting. I assume these trees will add to the assortment of wildlife in future years. I left a snag from a dead Geiger tree. The hummingbirds alight on the branches between feeding forays.

On December 18 I noted the following birds and butterflies in one hour of time:

(See typical bird photos on back cover)

- Gray Catbirds, Mocking Birds and Cardinals eating fruit of the Firebush
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird nectaring on the Firebush and the Firespike
- American Redstart and Common Yellowthroat foraging for insects in the thicket
- Zebra Heliconian butterflies feeding on the Mexican Flamevine and Firebush
- Giant Swallowtail, Polydamas, Sulfur and Skipper butterflies nectaring on the Firebush and the Firespike
- A male Painted Bunting clipping off Firespike blossoms and squeezing the flower base to extract the nectar (in the past I've also noticed Cardinals doing the same)



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Affiliate of the International Palm Society

2013 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	

Acrocomia crispa, the other Cuban Belly Palm,
in Havana Botanical Garden

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

January 2013 Monthly Update

American Redstart

Common Yellowthroat

Northern Cardinal

Gray Catbird

Painted Bunting

Ruby-throated
Hummingbird