



Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

Affiliate of the International Palm Society

Monthly Update

October 2015

UPCOMING MEETING

October 7, 2015

7:30 p.m. at

Mounts Botanical Garden

Speaker: Craig Morell

Subject: The Palms and Cycads at Pinecrest Gardens

October Featured Auction Plants

Phytelephas aequatorialis (see link below)
<http://www.palmbeachpalmcycadsociety.com/palms/documents/PhytelephasAequatorialis.pdf>
&
Kerriodoxa elegans

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Page

- 1 Upcoming Meetings and featured auction plants
- 1 Palm Society Board Contact Numbers
- 2 FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Elaeis guineensis*
- 4 Some Thoughts on Sharpening Pruning Shears
- 5 Annual picnic and Fall plant sale dates in October
- 6 Cycad Day 2015

Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society 2015 Officers & Executive Committee

Tom Ramiccio, President (561) 386-7812
 Don Bittel, Vice President (772) 521-4601
 Ruth Lynch, Secretary (561) 312-5046
 Janice DiPaola, Director & Membership Chair
 (561) 748-1918
 Ingrid Dewey, Treasurer (561) 791-3300
 Charlie Beck, Director & Editor (561) 963-5511
 Terry Lynch, Director (561) 582-7378
 Gerry Valentini, Director (561) 735-0978
 Tom Whisler, Director (561) 627-8328
 Betty Ahlborn, Immediate Past President
 (561) 798-4562

Appointees

Charlie Beck, Librarian
 Ruth Lynch, Refreshment Chairman
 Brenda Beck, Historian
 Brenda LaPlatte, Webmaster

SEPTEMBER "THANK YOU"

- Door:** Charlie & Brenda Beck
- Food:** Janice DePaola, Duane Heiser, Ruth Lynch, Rick Murray, Sue Pepler, Tom Ramiccio, Gerard Valentini
- Plants:** Charlie Beck, Susan Cioci, Dale Holton, Jason Lopez, Ruth Sallenbach

VISIT US AT

www.palmbeachpalmcycadsociety.com

All photographs in this issue were provided by Charlie Beck unless otherwise specified.

Opinions expressed and products or recommendations published in this newsletter may not be the opinions or recommendations of the Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society or its board of directors.

FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Elaeis guineensis*

by Charlie Beck

Elaeis guineensis is a large, solitary, pinnate palm native to West and Southwest Africa. Its common name is the African Oil Palm. It's typically found growing along streams, rivers and swampy areas. It also can also be found in drier areas away from water sources. It's a highly adaptable palm. It can reach 60' tall but is usually less than 40'. Stems measure 2' in diameter and when the leaf bases finally detach, the stem has an attractive pattern of knobby leaf scars.

E. guineensis is a monoecious palm which can have both male and female separate, inflorescences growing on a single palm, or both male and female flowers growing on a single inflorescence. Both the fleshy outer seed coat and the actual seed are loaded with oil. Its fruit is the principal source of palm oil and can be used to produce biofuel. Huge areas in the tropics have been deforested to create monocultures of African Oil Palms. Due to this environmental impact, these palm plantations have become very controversial. Large tracts of land in Malaysia, Indonesia, Latin America, and Africa have been cleared and many native plants and animals have been sacrificed due to habitat loss. There is an argument that palm oil production is a more efficient method of oil production because it requires less land than vegetable oil from sources such as soybean, corn, cottonseed, rapeseed, etc.

E. guineensis is a palm well adapted to growing in Palm Beach County's humid climate. This palm is best when planted in full sun but will adapt to growing in the shade. It loves moist soil but will grow without supplemental irrigation. Periodic inundation does not set this palm back.

The large spread of this palm somewhat resembles the Canary Island Date Palm, *Phoenix canariensis*. *E. guineensis* grows faster than *P. canariensis* and it's not susceptible to lethal yellowing. The fronds measure about 15' in length and the petioles are armed with sharp teeth. This is not a self-cleaning palm, so when the palm grows out of reach for pruning, a skirt of dried leaves persist. When the dried palm fronds do release, they are usually not heavy enough to cause damage to under plantings.


We have three *E. guineensis* planted in our garden. Two are planted near a highly alkaline pea gravel driveway and one is planted in sugar sand. After 20 years of growth, all three measure 30 feet tall. These palms survived the hurricanes in 2004 and 2005, so they are wind resistant. The record cold winters of 2009 and 2010 had no effect on our palms, but I did hear that some cold damage occurred in Loxahatchee in those years. If you are located east of the turnpike, you should have no worries of cold sensitivity.

E. guineensis is used as a food source by local wildlife. Squirrels, raccoons and possums enjoy eating the fruit of this palm. Of course the seeds pass through their digestive tract and readily germinate wherever deposited. Many mature palms have copious offspring seedlings but *E. guineensis* rivals our native *Sabal palmetto* and *Roystonea regia* as food source for native fauna and for the widespread dispersal of seeds. I have found seedlings from our palms growing over 500' away from the parent plant. These palm seedlings grow on high, dry areas and they grow at the bottom of 3' deep drainage ditches. These palms survive weeks totally submerged in water without any apparent setback. Fortunately seedlings are killed by an application of Glyphosate (Roundup). The seedlings do not have the waxy coating which make many palms immune to this weed killer. So be warned this palm has invasive tendencies. *E. guineensis* seems not to require any irrigation or fertilization to flourish. I have cut down many large specimens discovered growing in inappropriate locations.



Village Marina
396 Torpey Road
Fort Pierce, Florida. 34946
Wes Taylor
Office 772-464-4391 Cell 772-519-1297

(561) 586-2332



LAKE OSBORNE ANIMAL CLINIC

JOHN T. LYNCH, D.V.M. 1502 Lake Osborne Dr.
Lake Worth, FL 33461

HOLTON NURSERY
PALMS and CYCADS

5221 3rd Road
Lake Worth, FL 33467
Phone (561) 965-6792
Email cycadnut@gate.net



"By appointment only"



Elaeis guineensis
in the Beck Garden
20 years old



Elaeis guineensis
Leaf base scars



Elaeis guineensis
Petiole spines



Elaeis guineensis in Ruth
Sallenbach's Garden

Some Thoughts on Sharpening Pruning Shears by Charlie Beck

Sharp cutting tools make the job of pruning a much easier task. Whether it's a chef's knife or a garden pruning shear, a sharp edge is essential. Brand new equipment which have professionally sharpened cutting edges are a pleasure to use. I have never been able to recreate that brand new edge, but I have searched for a quick method to achieve a reasonably sharp edge on my pruning shears.

Years ago, I'd disassemble my pruning shears so that I could sharpen the edge on a bench grinder. This entailed a complete disassembly of the shears to gain access to the cutting edge. Disassembly most often, was not an easy process. Sometimes screws were rusted in place and required an application of liquid penetrant to break loose the threaded connection. Sometimes the screw driver slot was rounded off so an appropriate wrench would be required. Of course all of the parts would need to be guarded from falling on the floor and disappearing under a bench. Reassembly of the pruning shears required tightening the screw to just the right amount of friction between the two halves. This usually took a couple of adjustments.

My bench grinder did not have a guide which was appropriate for pivoting a curved cutting edge at the proper angle. My method was imprecise and I always removed too much material. Pruning shears have a limited number of sharpening cycles. Eventually you need to replace the cutting blade due to material loss from the grinding process.

I searched for a way to sharpen the edge without disassembly of the shears. Also, I wanted to remove less metal during each sharpening cycle.

I found a neat tool for sharpening pruners without disassembly. I profiled it in our July 2011 newsletter.

(http://www.palmbeachpalmcycadsociety.com/newsletter/News_2011_07.pdf) This tool featured a carbide edge which you could scrape along the cutting surface and it provided a quick tune-up to a dulled cutting blade. This worked fine for tune-ups but eventually you need to reestablish the entire taper of the cutting edge.

You can use a file to reestablish the edge taper, but my pruners were made of an alloy which seemed impervious to a metal file. I found a set of diamond coated files at our local Harbor Freight hardware store. A set of 10 small files cost less than \$10. I know these files are available on Amazon and I'll bet they can be found at any hardware store. When new, these diamond coated files can be used to reestablish the cutting blade taper. The problem is they tend to lose their bite and they wear out quickly. These files are also good for quick tune-ups of the cutting edge, just like the carbide sharpener mentioned above.

I searched for higher quality coarse, diamond files which might be more durable. They were quite expensive and I wasn't convinced they would be worth the cost. I needed to find another method to reestablish the cutting blade taper without disassembling the pruners.

It occurred to me, maybe I could use that Dremel Rotary Tool that I had bought years ago. My Dremel Rotary Tool came with an assortment of bits. One of the bits was a tiny drum which came assembled with a replaceable sandpaper band. I gave it a try on my pruning shears and it did a great job of reestablishing the blade taper. Although the new taper wasn't a precise angle, I could fine tune the edge with the diamond file or the carbide scraper. Problem solved!

If you have a Dremel Rotary Tool at your avail, now you have a new use for it.



Dremel Rotary tool,, diamond file set, carbide sharpener

save these dates!

**Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society
Fall Plant Sale**

at Mounts Botanical Garden

October 10, 2015
9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

and

October 11, 2015
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.



**Palm Society Annual Picnic
and Best Auction of the Year**

October 17, 2015

10:00 a.m.: Garden Tour
11:30 a.m.: Pot Luck Lunch
Noon: Auction

In Ruth Sallenbach's fantastic garden

Please bring a chair, main or side dish, and a
plant donation (of any kind) for the auction.



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CYCAD DAY 2015



Saturday, October 24, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Mounts Botanical Garden
531 North Military Trail, West Palm Beach, FL 33415
<http://www.mounts.org>

RSVP BY Saturday, October 17, 2015

The Cycad Society (TCS) has only one board meeting each year, and it is usually scheduled in a different part of the country (or occasionally a different country). Associated with the annual board meeting, TCS also hosts a special Cycad Day event on the Saturday following the board meeting. Cycad Day is open to members and nonmembers alike.

BOARD MEETING – Oct. 23 – Conference Room

The Cycad Society Board of Directors meeting will be held at Mounts Botanical Garden on Friday, October 23, from 9:00AM – 4:00PM. Current members are welcome to observe the board meeting. If you would like to attend, please contact TCS President Craig Nazor at: c.nazor@earthlink.net. Please put "TCS 2015 Board Meeting" in the subject line.

CYCAD DAY – Oct. 24 – Exhibit Halls A & B

FEES

Suggested donation to Mounts.....\$5
Box lunch (optional)*.....\$15
Cycad Society Membership – 1 year**...\$35

AGENDA

9:00AM Registration
10:00AM Lectures
12:00PM..... Box Lunch
1:30PM..... Auction**

All payments to TCS need to be made by cash or check.

* Box lunch consists of a drink and ham, turkey, or vegetarian sandwich. Please RSVP to Jaynee Welty at 801-860-4503 or jaynee100@yahoo.com if you wish to attend, and state your sandwich choice. Please put "Cycad Day 2015 attendance" in the subject line.

**You must be a member of TCS in order to bid at the auction.

We are accepting donations of cycad plants, seeds, or cycad-related material (cycad books, fossils, paintings, etc.) to help further the goals of TCS. To make arrangements, please contact Jody Haynes at jody@cycadconservation.org or 305-282-3639. TCS is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, so donations are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

The Cycad Society is dedicated to the conservation of cycads through education and scientific research. Funds raised from this event help support worthy cycad education, research, and conservation grants.

More information will be posted at: <http://www.cycad.org/> as it becomes available.