



Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

Affiliate of the International Palm Society

Monthly Update

September 2016

August "THANK YOU"

- Door: Richard Murray & Don Bittel
- Food: Ruth Lynch, Cathy Burger, Ingrid Dewey, Elise Moloney, Tom & Carol Ramiccio
- Plants: Steve Garland, Suzanna Walker, & Montgomery Botanical Garden
- Auction: Don Bittel & Terry Lynch

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- Betty Ahlborn, Immediate Past President
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Appointees

- Brenda Beck, Historian
Brenda LaPlatte, Webmaster

UPCOMING MEETING

September 7, 2016
7:30 p.m.

At Mounts Botanical Garden

Speaker: Rochelle Wolberg
Interim Operations Manager at
Mounts Botanical Garden

Subject: Upcoming changes at Mounts
and upcoming plant sales

FEATURED AUCTION PLANTS:

Neoveitchia storckii
Itaya amicornum

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: *Trachycarpus fortunei*
by Charlie Beck

Trachycarpus fortunei is native to central and eastern China. It is also found in Japan and Myanmar but these populations are thought to be introduced. This palm is widely cultivated, so the exact location of its origin is unknown. *T. fortunei* is typically found between elevations of 300-7800' in areas of cool wet summers and cold, often snowy, winters. It is considered to be the most cold hardy palm with an upright stem. Its common name is the Windmill Palm.

T. fortunei is a palmate, medium sized palm. It's closely related to *Chamaerops*, the European Fan Palm. It can grow 45' tall on 10" diameter stems. In habitat, leaves measure 3' across and petioles measure 2' long. Petioles are not spiny. Stems are covered with persistent dark brown fiber. Thin ribbon-like ligules emerge with the new leaf. Fronds are not self-cleaning, so it can form a shag of dried leaves. Some drooping of leaf tips might occur, but *T. fortunei* var. '*Wagnerianus*' (formerly *T. wagnerianus*) has very stiff leaf tips and smaller fronds and shorter petioles. This variety has slightly glaucous leaf underside. *T. fortunei* is considered a dioecious palm.

This palm was first brought to Europe in 1830 and became extensively cultivated throughout temperate and subtropical areas. Beautiful specimens grow outdoors in unlikely countries such as United Kingdom, Denmark, and Switzerland. In North America it grows on the west coast from San Diego to British Columbia. It's planted outdoors at the Missouri Botanical Garden. I have seen photos of successful plantings in Ohio. It's reported to be cold hardy to zone 7a, so I probably could have grown it my hometown, Philadelphia, Pa. On the east coast *T. fortunei* is commonly planted in Central and Northern Florida, and it can be found in gardens as far north as Virginia. If you search the web for Virginia Palm Society you can see photos of tall, vigorous palms covered in snow.

This palm is taken for granted by temperate climate, palm growers, just like we take coconut

palms for granted in South Florida. Californians repeatedly fail at growing coconuts but that doesn't stop them from trying. *T. fortunei* is not easily grown in South Florida, so it presents a real challenge for local growers.

Some of the factors against successfully growing this palm locally are as follows:

- Resents summer high daytime temperatures accompanied with high humidity (most active growth during cool season)
- Resents summer high nighttime temperatures (not similar to native habitat)
- Possibly harmed by soil borne nematodes
- Moderately susceptible to lethal yellowing
- Moderately susceptible to phytophthora bud rot

John Kennedy from the Central Florida Palm Society told me that *T. fortunei* grows well in Orlando, inland northern Tampa and Gainesville. John said that it usually declines soon after planting in Vero Beach. Even planting of large palms imported from northern nurseries die soon after planting. He knew a palm enthusiast who dissected the stem of a dying specimen to find a thread of fungus running down the center of the stem. John's theory is that high water tables have a negative effect on this palm. That might be the most important negative factor against its successful growth.

Years ago Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden had several species of *Trachycarpus* planted. They were mature, healthy specimens and were quite attractive. All of these palms have perished and they are no longer listed on their living plant list. You might remember seeing some of these palms planted outside of the Rare Plant House. The palms might have perished because of Hurricane Andrew in 1992 or they might have succumbed to our South Florida climate.

I planted several 3 gallon specimens of *T. fortunei* in our garden. All died for unknown reasons. Occasionally you find this palm offered for sale at Home Depot. These palms must have been grown up north and shipped south to Palm Beach County. These were large specimens with several feet of stem and they were priced right at \$69 for a 10 gallon pot. Certainly a palm this size would thrive in our garden. Wrong! This palm died just as fast as the smaller ones planted previously. Well, at that time I gave up on *T. fortunei*.

(Continued on page 8)





Trachycarpus fortunei 9 years from seed
in Beck Garden



Trachycarpus fortunei
42" tall stem in Beck Garden



Trachycarpus fortunei 'Wagnerianus'
in Beck Garden



Trachycarpus fortunei ribbon like ligules in Beck Garden



Trachycarpus fortunei pot anchor in Beck Garden

Random Beauty in the Beck Garden



Ptychosperma cuneatum



Pritchardia vuylstekeana

Our Sincere Condolences

The Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society received some very sad news in August.
Long time Palm Society member Norm Moody passed away
&
Carolyn Holton (Dale Holton's wife) also passed away

On behalf of all palm society members, we send our sincere condolences out to the Moody and Holton families.

Proven Cold Hardy Palms

by Charlie Beck

If you want to know how cold hardy a palm is you can consult a book or the internet. There's a lot of information available. There's even a book, "Betrock's Cold Hardy Palms, which lists a low temperature limit for each palm. All of this information is a good place to start but a lot of the information is just copied from one reference to the other. Not many authors have actual experience growing palms in those climates. Also, 30°F in California is quite different from 30°F in Florida. How long the low temperature lasts and how quickly warm-up occurs are important factors when assessing hardiness. Firsthand knowledge from someone actually growing palms in a known climate is your most reliable source of information.

Over the years I've compared notes on palm growing with John Kennedy. John has been a palm enthusiast for over 35 years. He has had success and failure growing a wide assortment of palms in his half acre garden in Vero Beach (80 miles north of West Palm Beach). John gave a presentation to our society years ago about many palms that didn't survive in his garden. He is an excellent lecturer and writer, and has contributed many articles to our society's newsletter. John has been the editor of the Central Florida Palm Society Bulletin for many years, so he is privy to the articles written by growers from all over Central Florida.

John contributed photos of some of his cold hardy palms. These are mature specimens which have


grown well in John's garden. Some of them grow better in Vero Beach than in Palm Beach County. Personally, I have had little success growing *Oraniposis* and *Laccospadix*, but I am willing to retry. See pages 6 and 8 for photos of John's cold hardy palms.

I did a little research on the difference in historical average and record low temperatures in Miami, West Palm Beach, and Vero Beach. Although West Palm Beach is approximately halfway between Miami and Vero Beach, the winter nighttime temperatures vary more than what one might infer from distance alone. See table below.

AVERAGE LOW	December	January	February
Vero Beach	55	51	54
West Palm Beach	60	57	59
Miami	63	60	62
RECORD LOW	December	January	February
Vero Beach	23	21	28
West Palm Beach	28	27	32
Miami	30	30	32

Note: All photographs for this article were provided by John Kennedy.

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Proven Cold Hardy Palms in John Kennedy's Vero Beach Garden



Phoenix rupicola



Burretiokentia hapala



Laccospadix australasica



Livistona saribus

Proven Cold Hardy Palms in John Kennedy's Vero Beach Garden



(Continued from page 2)

In 2007, our society toured Tom Ramiccio's garden (Tom is our current society president). Tom had a beautiful specimen of *T. fortunei* planted in his yard. Tom bought this palm with 10' of stem from a local nursery. At the time we toured, its overall height was approximately 25' and it was a real beauty! Tom handed out seedling Windmill Palms which were grown from seeds that he collected in Italy and Switzerland. Unfortunately, Tom's beautiful *T. fortunei* started to decline sometime after our visit. It eventually died with the whole crown falling down.

The sight of Tom's palm gave me inspiration to resume my quest to grow it. The seedling that Tom gave me grew vigorously in containers and when it outgrew a 3 gallon pot, I planted it in 20" ceramic pot. I decided that it would live its life in that pot and never be planted out in the garden. Because high winds toppled the palm, I sunk two 4x4" posts in the ground and tied them together with a 2x6". Then I anchored the pot to the support with wire rope. This stabilized the palm. The palm roots have grown through the single drainage hole in the bottom of the pot and have rooted into the ground. Being located in an irrigated area of the garden, I never manually water the pot. I fertilize once a year with Nutricote, Micro-Max, lime and a dusting of Borax. The palm seems happy in this situation and has grown well. It receives full afternoon sunlight. If the palm roots ever split the pot, I'll ring the pot with retaining wall blocks and backfill with potting soil.

Several years ago I visited Jesse Durko's Nursery in Davie, Florida. Jesse usually has some unique plants for sale which include palms and cycads. While perusing the palms, I spotted the most beautiful little palmate palm. It had stiff, dark green, pinwheel leaves and I had no clue what it was. It was *T. fortunei* var. '*Wagnerianus*' and for \$50 it was a bargain. After a few years this palm grew large



Allagoptera arenaria in Kennedy garden

enough to be transplanted into a 20" ceramic pot. This palm is very happy in this situation and has grown well in full afternoon sun. It's much more compact than the typical Windmill Palm and in my opinion is more attractive.

T. fortunei is rarely offered for sale in South Florida, and rightfully so, because of its poor performance in the ground. But now you know that it can be grown successfully in a pot. Seeds are readily available on the internet. Even Amazon offers seeds and small plants for sale. If you find this palm attractive and you're up to the challenge, give it a try.

SAVE THE DATES

Palm Society Annual Fall Palm & Cycad Sale

Saturday, October 8th, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Sunday, October 9th, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

At Mounts Botanical Garden

Palm Society Annual Member Picnic and Best Auction of the Year

Saturday, October 15th

10:00 a.m. - Garden Tour

11:30 a.m. - Pot Luck Lunch

Noon - Auction

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

Address will be emailed to members next month.