



Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

Affiliate of the International Palm Society

Monthly Update

November 2016

A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU TO
RUTH SALLENBACH FOR HOSTING
OUR ANNUAL PICNIC IN
HER FABULOUS GARDEN

THANK YOU
TO EVERYONE
THAT ATTENDED OUR
ANNUAL PICNIC AND AUCTION.

WE HAD WONDERFUL FOOD
AND HAD A FUN TIME
AND GREAT AUCTION!

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UPCOMING MEETING

November 2, 2016

7:30 p.m.

At Mounts Botanical Garden

Speaker: Dr. Larry Noblick
Palm Biologist at Montgomery Botanical Garden

Subject: Exploring the Seychelles: Home
of the Double Coconut

FEATURED AUCTION PLANTS:

Kerriodoxa elegans
Verschaffeltia splendida

VISIT US AT

www.palmbeachpalmcycadsociety.com

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

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Featured This Month: *Sabal etonia*
by Charlie Beck

Florida has 11 native palms, but only 4 palm species are currently considered native to Palm Beach County (PBC). (Historical records indicate that *Roystonea regia* was a fifth PBC native, but cold snaps virtually eliminated these palms from PBC natural areas hundreds of years ago).

Two of the native species, *Sabal palmetto* (Cabbage Palm) and *Serenoa repens* (Saw Palmetto), are well known and widely distributed. *Coccothrinax argentata* (Silver Thatch Palm) is a rare find in southern coastal Palm Beach County. I have not yet encountered it in south county habitat. Historically it ranged north to Lake Worth.

The fourth PBC native palm is *Sabal etonia* (Scrub Palmetto). We should all know this palm because it's a Florida endemic, as described in Scott Zona's Monograph of Sabal, 1990. It's the only native palm that is found exclusively in Florida. In nature, *S. etonia* is found growing on deep sand ridges in southeast and central Florida. There was also a population discovered in western Florida near Bradenton. It typically grows with Sand Pine and xerophytic Oaks in very well drained, scrub habitat. Most *S. etonia* have disappeared due to urban expansion on the Atlantic Coastal Ridge. It has also disappeared on the Central Florida Lake Wales Ridge due to clearing for agricultural. Although much of its natural habitat is gone, it grows in two large protected areas found in Central Florida, Ocala National Forest (northcentral FL) and Archbold Biological Station (northwest of Lake Okechobee).

Lucky for us, PBC had the foresight to preserve several natural scrub habitats where this palm can be found growing in all of its glory! It can also be found growing along the railroad tracks which run west of I95. I found *S. etonia* growing at the Seacrest Scrub Natural Area in Boynton Beach. This is a site where Gopher Tortoises can also be found. This location is typical habitat for *S. etonia*- high and dry. *S. etonia* is found in full sun and in the shade of Sand Pines and *S. palmetto*. *Serenoa repens* also grows at this site. On the

day that I visited, a field of many *S. etonia* were recovering after being cut to the ground. I assume this was done to reduce understory biomass for fire suppression purposes. There are homes located next to the preserve. This palm is considered fire resistant and is reported to quickly regenerate after burns.

S. etonia is a small, palmate palm with either a subterranean or a short upright stem. If upright, the stem's maximum height is 6'. It holds 4-7 green fronds which are strongly costapalmate. The costa extends deeply into the leaf and is prominently recurved. Leaf segments are deeply segmented and hair like fibers emerge from the leaflet edges. As with other *Sabal sp.*, the petioles are smooth. The inflorescences emerge upright and do not extend beyond the leaves. White flowers are fragrant and attract butterflies and other native pollinators. As fruits form, infructescence can be weighted down and lie on the ground. The infructescence has a bushy appearance. Mature, round fruit are brown or black and measure ½" across. Birds and other wildlife eat the fruit. *S. etonia* is a host plant for the Monk Skipper Butterfly.

How do you distinguish *S. etonia* from similar Florida natives?

Distinguishing *Sabal etonia* from *Serenoa repens* is easy. *S. repens* has true palmate leaves without a costa. It also has teeth along its petioles. *S. repens* may have subterranean stems but it tends to form multiple crowns along the stem and is usually not solitary in form.

Sabal minor usually grows in moist locations. Habitat rarely or never overlaps. *S. minor* and *S. etonia* have similar stature and stems but *S. minor* leaves are weakly costapalmate- not strongly costapalmate. *S. minor* inflorescences are much longer and grow beyond the leaves. *S. minor* also has smaller globose fruit.

Immature *S. palmetto* look similar to *S. etonia*. Both palms have strongly costapalmate, recurved fronds. The most apparent distinguishing feature is the inflorescence. If the palm is under 9' in overall height and it's blooming with inflorescences shorter than the leaves, it is *S. etonia*. *S. palmetto*, under 9' in overall height, usually have not yet bloomed. When *S. palmetto* does bloom, the inflorescences are longer than the leaves. At that stage, the entire crown is noticeably larger than *S. etonia*.

We planted *S. etonia* in our garden 17 years ago. You might think that a scrub palm, native to high and dry sandy ridges might not perform well in an irrigated, sometimes inundated, garden setting. That is not the case. It has grown steadily without any problems at all. This is a palm perfectly adapted to growing in our

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Palm Beach County Natural Area, Boynton Beach



Palm Beach County Natural Area
mature *Sabal etonia* with immature fruit



Palm Beach County Natural Area
Sabal etonia with fragrant, white flowers



Palm Beach County Natural Area
Sabal etonia regenerating after clearing

***Sabal etonia*:- Frond Comparison of Select Florida Native Palmate Palms**



Serenoa repens
Palmate frond
(no costa)



Sabal minor
Weakly costapalmate
frond



Sabal etonia
Strongly, costapalmate,
recurved frond
Blooms on short inflo-
rescence when below 9'
overall height



17 year old *Sabal etonia*
In Beck garden

2016 Annual Member Picnic & Auction
Photos by Elise Moloney



A few members enjoying the afternoon



Picnic hostess, Ruth Sallenbach and family



Picnic hostess, Ruth Sallenbach
with great granddaughter



Cathy and Lew Burger



Entertainment and auctioneering provided by Terry Lynch and Don Bittel

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sandy soil. Once established there's no need to irrigate or fertilize it. Of course, with irrigation and fertilization it should grow faster. Our palm is only 5' tall overall and it appears to be forming an upright stem. You should not be concerned with this palm running all along the ground into pathways, based on our palm staying put after 17 years. I would not expect this palm to spread like *Serenoa repens*. Our palm is a mature blooming specimen.

S. etonia is a great palm for PBC. It's especially well adapted to growing in our sandy soils. It

grows in sun or shade. It's drought tolerant, cold hearty and has a moderate to high salt tolerance. It grows in wet or dry soils. It requires no maintenance after it's established and it should not outgrow its situation. It makes a great groundcover and can add texture to your garden understory. And don't forget it's our only Florida endemic palm! If you don't have room for it in your garden, admire it at one of our PBC preserved scrub habitats. There's plenty of seed available in habitat so give it a try.

Coconut Harvest by Charlie Beck

As Hurricane Mathew approached with its 140 mph winds, I decided to remove all of the coconuts from the palm beside our home. I used a pole pruner to cut each infructescence and brought down whole clusters with each cut. They were quite heavy- heavier than I thought they'd be. Note for the future: don't plant crushable plant material under coconut trees! Lucky for me, the *Zamia floridana* withstood the pounding.

I did have experience harvesting coconuts but I usually brought down one fruit at a time. Over the years I have developed a plan to drain coconut water and access the coconut flesh (endosperm). I'll share my method with you, so that you might have a starting point to develop a plan that works best for you.

Any freshly harvested coconut, mature or immature, contains delicious coconut water. As you can guess, fresh coconut water tastes much better than store purchased products. Store bought coconut water must be processed to provide a long shelf life. Freshly harvested coconut water stays fresh in the refrigerator for only a few days. Water stays fresh in the coconut for a much longer period, so harvest only what you can use in a few days. Coconut water is my favorite, refreshing drink. It's also excellent in homemade smoothies. I

only wish that fresh coconut water could magically appear without having to actually do the draining.

Suggested Method and Equipment:

I have found that a wood boring, auger drill bit is best to use for coconut drilling. Standard twist drills work, but they don't cut as fast as auger bits. Any size will work, but I use 3/8-1/2" bits.


I use a 36 ounce clear measuring cup to collect the coconut water. This provides a stable base and is perfectly sized to match a 6" strainer. The cup should be clear so you can tell when the draining is complete. If the cup or bowl is larger than the strainer, husk fibers can bypass the strainer and fall into the water.

I use a 6" diameter fine mesh strainer to filter the water. Standard mesh strainers let too many shavings into the coconut water. I've also used coffee filters in the past, but that is very time consuming process. You can find a fine mesh strainer for under \$10 at your local box store.

I usually drill the drain hole on the convex side of the coconut. That side fits nicely into the

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strainer. I drill the second vent hole into the opposite, flat side. Sometimes the drain hole clogs, so just add a second drain hole.

Once the water is drained, you might want to harvest the coconut flesh inside the husk. I use a one sided hatchet and a small sledge hammer to cut through the coconut husk. One or two strikes on the first side and a single strike on the opposite side is all you need to make the split. I place a scrap piece of 4x4 below the coconut, so not to damage anything below the hatchet cutting edge. I do not recommend splitting a coconut with a long handled axe. Unless you develop a method to securely hold the coconut and you have perfect aim, an axe strike usually makes the coconut shoot to the side.

Immature coconut interiors are lined with an edible coconut jelly. I usually pass on that delicacy. Mature coconuts yield sweet flesh that is unmatched by sweetened, store bought products. I haven't found an easy way to separate the flesh from the shell. I use a knife with a stiff blade to score and pry off chunks of endosperm. If the coconut is older, you might find a swollen, edible embryo inside.

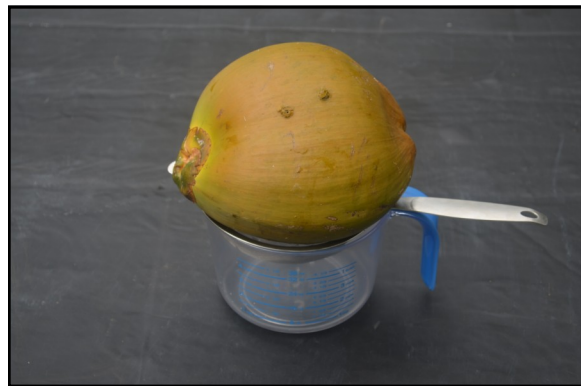
When I split a number of coconuts and have excess fruit, I leave the split coconuts out in the garden. Overnight, raccoons and other native animals feast on the flesh and leave me with cleaned-out husks. I cut these husks into smaller pieces and use them as orchid growing medium.

Smoothie Recipe

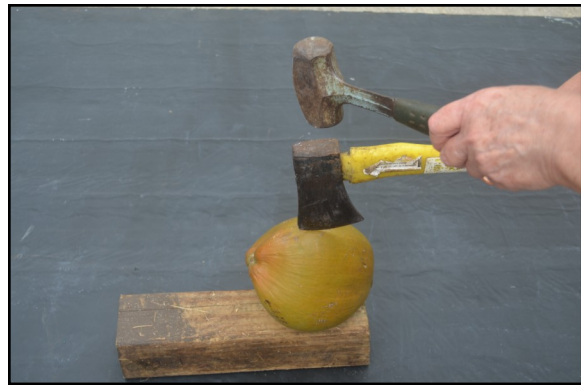
- 2 store bought or 3 homegrown bananas (cut in half if frozen)
- 3 or more strawberries (optional)
- 2-3 heaping tablespoons of unsweetened Greek yogurt (coconut water is already sweet)
- Enough coconut water to provide the thickness you prefer
- 1-2 drops of vanilla (optional)
- If not using frozen fruit add a few ice cubes
- Blend until smooth



Auger bit, 6" diameter clear measuring cup, and fine mesh strainer



Drilled coconut draining water



Short handle hatchet and sledge hammer



Split coconut ready to eat