Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

Affiliate of the International Palm Society

Monthly Update March 2017

February "THANK YOU"

Door:	Elise Moloney & Don Bittel
Food:	Charlie Beck, Steve Garland, Elise Moloney, Robert Miller, Patrick Morris, Tom Ramiccio, Chris & Greg Spencer
Plants:	Robert Miller (Miller Palm Nursery)
Auction:	Don Bittel & Terry Lynch

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UPCOMING MEETING

March 1, 2017
7:30 p.m.
At Mounts Botanical Garden

Speaker: Chad Husby, Ph.D.
Botanical Horticulturist at Fairchild

Subject: Exploring the Spice Islands in the Footsteps of David Fairchild

FEATURED AUCTION PLANTS:

Archontophoenix cunninghamiana

Chamaedorea geonomiformis
(formally *C. tenella*)

Itaya amicorum

VISIT US AT

www.palmbeachpalmcycadsociety.com

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

Featured This Month: *Saribus rotundifolius*

by Charlie Beck

Saribus rotundifolius was first described and named *Corypha rotundifolia* in 1786. Since that time it was renamed many times. Throughout the years the genus was changed from *Corypha* to *Licuala, Livistona, Chamaerops*, back to *Livistona* (five different species), and then in 2011 was renamed *Saribus rotundifolius* which is its current classification.

The genus *Saribus* was resurrected to include 8 former *Livistona species* and *Pritchardiopsis jeanneneyi*. The reclassification was based on molecular and morphological data such as differences in inflorescences, epidermis cells and fibers. What amazes me the most is that *Saribus* is more closely related to *Pholidocarpus, Licuala* and *Johannesteijsmannia* than to the remaining species of *Livistona*.

Saribus rotundifolius is considered a variable species with a wide distribution throughout Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Its conservation status is "least concern." It is found at elevations of 0-1,000 feet. Native habitat straddles the equator ranging from 18°N to 10°S. Annual rainfall can be as high as 160 inches. That's 2-1/2 times the average annual rainfall in West Palm Beach. *S. rotundifolius* is usually found in wet locations including swamp forest, mangrove margins, rainforest, and along river courses.

S. rotundifolius is a solitary palm. In habitat they can emerge from the forest canopy and reach heights up to 150 feet. There's little chance of it growing that tall in Palm Beach County. This is a medium sized palm not much larger than the common Chinese Fan Palm, *Livistona chinensis*.

S. rotundifolius has large round costapalmate fronds that can measure up to 7' across. When young, the leaves are shallowly divided and they rival *Kerriodoxa elegans* in beauty. As the palm gains height the fronds may divide more deeply and become a little smaller. Being a variable species, the leaf tips may be either stiff or pendulous. The petioles are typically armed with black recurved spines, but some palms may have unarmed petioles, or may lose spines as it ages. The leaves display a prominent hastula measuring to 1" high.

S. rotundifolius is a monoecious palm which produce yellow hermaphroditic flowers. The inflorescences do not extend beyond the fronds. The fruit color and size is also variable. The globose fruit measure between ½ and 1" across. Fruit color starts out yellow, but may ripen to orange-red, red, dark violet, or bluish-black. It flowers and fruits all year long.

Aside from the beautiful, glossy, large, round leaves, the other major attraction of this palm is its interesting crisscross pattern of leaf base fibers. There are few palms which rival such an attractive pattern of fibers. Eventually the leaf bases do fall away, but they leave behind reddish leaf scars which are also quite attractive.

Most local palm enthusiasts know *Saribus rotundifolius* either as *Livistona rotundifolia* or *Livistona robinsoniana*. My experience with this palm is based on ones purchased as *Livistona robinsoniana.* That was the palm with distinctive stem rings and incredible leaf base fibers that I first saw at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden. Those palms were some of our first plantings in our garden back in 1993. *Livistona rotundifolia* was a common palm planted in commercial settings as a groundcover. Those palms had the same beautiful glossy leaves as *L. robinsoniana*, but I don't remember seeing any of those palms grow tall enough to observe their stems or fiber. Maybe

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Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society March Ramble

Sunday March 5, 2017
10:00 am.

Home of Dale Holton

Members will receive an email with Dale's home address.

South Florida Palm Society Garden Tour

by Charlie Beck

The 2016 South Florida Palm Society Fall Garden Tour included three stops in Homestead, FL: Botanics Wholesale Nursery, Tropical Research and Education Center (TREC), and the private garden of Kevin McLeod. South Florida Palm Society's garden tours are always worth attending. Even though Miami-Dade County soil and climate vary from Palm Beach County, many palm growing parallels can be made.

The first stop was Botanics Wholesale Nursery which was founded in 1980. This nursery grows plants in ground and containers. Palms and cycads were the main focus but natives, fruit trees and ornamentals were also offered for sale. Mike Tevelonis, general manager, led the tour of the growing areas.

The landscape around the entrance of the nursery was planted with interesting groupings of palms and cycads. *Ceratozamia, Encephalartos, Coccothrinax, Copernicia, Satakentia* and *Cryosophila* were some of the genera. This area also contained large cycads which were dug, wrapped and stored on pallets for easy transport. Wholesale prices of these large cycads were $2500 for the *Macrozamia moorei*, and $5000 for the *Encephalartos villosus*. Local, guaranteed installation of these large plants typically doubles the wholesale price. These cycads were probably decades old so they could add instant drama to your garden. We did not tour the acres of field grown palms but you could see unexpected genera such as *Attalea* and *Beccariophoenix.*

We toured tall shade houses filled with an amazing collection of *L. grandis, L. ramsayi, L. peltata var sumawongii and Cyrtostachys renda.* It was overwhelming to see so many perfectly grown specimens. Containers ranged in size from 3 to 25 gallons. Each pot was set in a water filled saucer. Mike explained that these palms grow best with this constant supply of moisture. Aside from normal fertilization, he top-dressed the containers with Milorganite every 4-6 weeks. Milorganite was used as an iron source. Mike also uses Milorganite on field grown palms.

Milorganite is a granular, organic fertilizer made from Milwaukee sewage sludge. Its analysis is 5 -2-0. Of the 5% nitrogen, 3% is slow release. It also contains 4% iron and 1.2% calcium and other minor elements. I've recently begun testing Milorganite on iron deficient palms in our garden. I apply it every other month. It will probably take a full year to judge the effect of this supplemental feeding. If it works, it would be a low cost, readily available (box stores), iron source for those difficult to grow palms that need extra iron.

Mike recounted an experience during the record cold winters of 2009 and 2010 when we experienced many nighttime low temperatures below 40°F. He had a large area of his shade-house filled with over one thousand *Cyrtostachys renda* (Sealing Wax Palm). Most of those palms died due to exposure to the repeated cold temperatures, but a couple of specimens survived. Mike has been dividing and propagating those cold hearty specimens. Mike said that sale of those palms are years away.

The second stop was the Tropical Research and Education Center (TREC) which is part of University of Florida's Extension Service. This center was established in 1929 to study the production of tropical and subtropical crops. They have a large collection of palms and some cycads along with acres of fruit trees and other crops. Most of the palm and cycad collection was planted decades ago. Palm production might have been studied many years ago but is no longer a current focus of research. Our tour guide said that the palm collection is rarely fertilized so the plants are left to grow on their own. I have toured this facility several times in the past three decades and can attest that most palms have grown very slowly.

One of the tour highlights was a beautiful grove of *Attalea crassispatha*. Another was one of the largest *Copernicia fallaensis* that I have seen in South Florida. Due to construction of a new building at the Research Center, a grove of *Copernicia baileyana* had to be relocated. The survival rate was high and most of the palms recovered and looked great. A baobab tree was toppled by Hurricane Andrew in 1992. This tree had a huge trunk and was too large to lift from its horizontal position. The tree apparently has rooted into the ground from its trunk and seems quite healthy.

The third stop was to the private garden of Kevin McLeod. Kevin is a board member of the South Florida Palm Society. His one acre garden is located in Ridgewood Estates. This area of Homestead has the highest elevation in all of Dade County. The substrate is solid oolitic limestone. Every planting hole must be augured or hand dug with a digging bar. Planting holes were drilled up to 3' in diameter. Holes for large palms like *Tahina spectabilis* were dug 8-9' deep.

Kevin excavated a large area 24' deep with the intention of creating a sunken garden. I was amazed that water didn't fill the deep pit. Kevin told me that during the wet season occasionally water would rise to fill the bottom with 3' of water. That equates to a water table 21' below grade in the rainy season. Since we toured his garden, Kevin changed his mind on the depth of the sunken garden. He filled it half way with an organic soil mix (see photo).

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once they outlived their usefulness as a groundcover they were removed.

We have several *S. rotundifolius* growing in our garden. They are 24, 10 and 5 years old. We are lucky to have this palm growing at different stages of maturity. All are beautiful. The youngest one resembles *Kerriodoxa elegans*. The middle age one is beginning to reach for the sky and will soon be showing off its crisscross leaf base fibers. The oldest one measures 15' to the lowest frond and has dropped most of the old leaf bases. The stem measures 8" in diameter at waist level.

I would classify this palm as a medium to slow grower in Palm Beach County. Even though it's not a fast vertical grower, it is a vigorous grower and looks impressive at all stages. With recommended fertilization and regular irrigation, our palms have never developed nutritional deficiencies. They have never been affected by winter low temperatures since 1993. Reference books rate it hardy to zone 10a, but John Kennedy has grown this palm successfully for 18 years, without regular irrigation, in Vero Beach- zone 9b. Being a swamp palm, it would be happiest planted in a wet, low lying area with regular irrigation. Immature palms are most impressive when planted in the shade, but can also grow well with full exposure to the sun. In any case, it will reach for the sky and eventually grow through any canopy that you have.

To sum up, this palm loves growing in our sandy soil. If you live in Western Palm Beach County and have marl soil, it would probably be even be more vigorous. It's also a strong grower on oolitic limestone in Miami. With fertilization and irrigation it will reward you with a beautiful crown of leaves at all stages of growth. I consider it an anchor palm which looks great all year long.

(South Florida Palm Society Tour Continued from page 3)
Kevin's garden was only six years old. I was blown away by how fast his palms grew in that time. The garden contained over 150 different species of palms as well as many other trees including several species of Baobab trees. Kevin must be doing something right to achieve such rapid growth in six years. Kevin attributes all of his knowledge of palms to his father, Mark Katz and Ellis Brown.

Kevin installed an irrigation system only 2-1/2 years ago. Prior to that, all plants were on drip irrigation. He usually irrigates twice a week, but during dry spells he occasionally increases it to three times. He has been fertilizing once a year, but he hopes to increase that amount.

One memorable palm was the rare and colorful *Livistona carinensis*, which is very slow growing in Palm Beach County. Kevin has the largest *Tahina spectabilis* that I have seen in South Florida. There were many species of *Copernicia* planted and he had a dozen 25 gallon *C. baileyana* palms ready for planting. Some of my observations made from this South Florida Palm Society Tour are as follows:

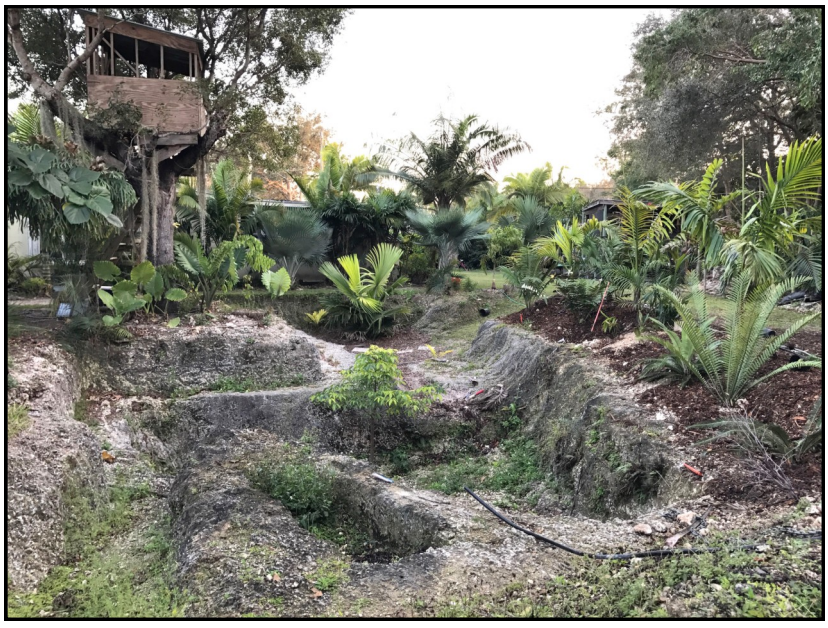
- Some containerized *Licuala* sp. grow faster if set in a saucer of water.

- Milorganite might be a low cost iron source for deficient palms.

- Many neglected palms at TREC could survive with minimal maintenance. Some palms even looked quite healthy.

- High elevation allows cold air to drain away on cold winter nights.

- Dade County palms grow faster than in Palm Beach County due to significantly warmer winters: in 2017 between February 3rd & 14th, ten nighttime low temperatures averaged 5.4°F lower in West Palm Beach than in Miami; in 2010 on the ten nights below 40°F, West Palm Beach low temperatures averaged 3.4°F lower than in Miami.



Kevin McLeod's Sunken Garden (half filled)

Saribus rotundifolius- 10 years old (above),
5 years old (below) in Beck Garden

S. rotundifolius- costa in Beck Garden (above)
S. rotundifolius- 18 years old in
Kennedy Garden (below)

Saribus rotundifolius- leaf underside side

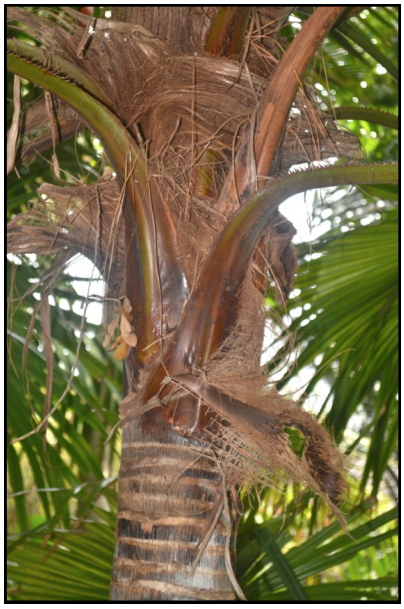
Saribus rotundifolius 24 years old in Beck Garden

Saribus rotundifolius- leaf topside

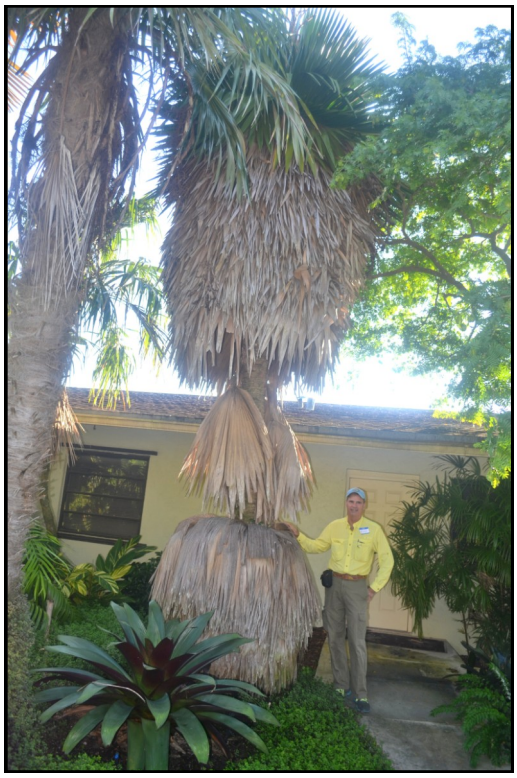
Saribus rotundifolius- hastula

Saribus rotundifolius- petiole

Saribus rotundifolius- crisscross leaf fiber in Kennedy Garden



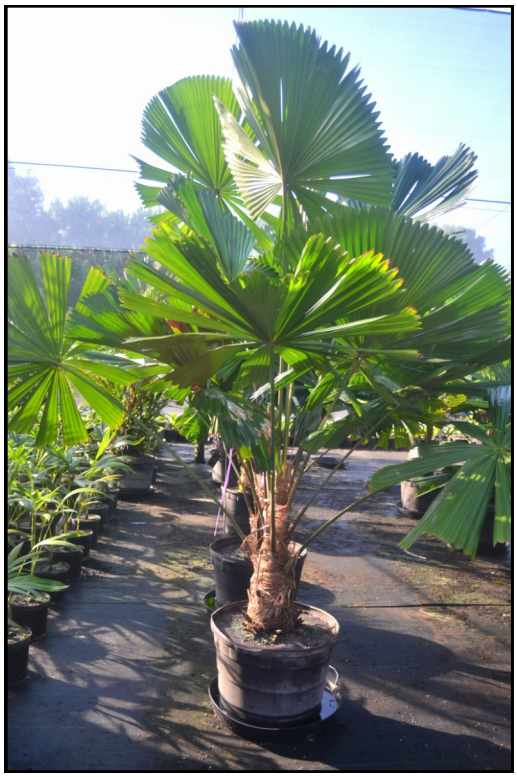
Saribus rotundifolius- reddish leaf scars in Beck Garden



Elvis Cruz lending scale to
Copernicia macroglossa (Botanics)

Licuala ramsayi (Botanics)

Licuala peltata var. 'sumawongii' (Botanics)



Licuala ramsayi (Botanics)

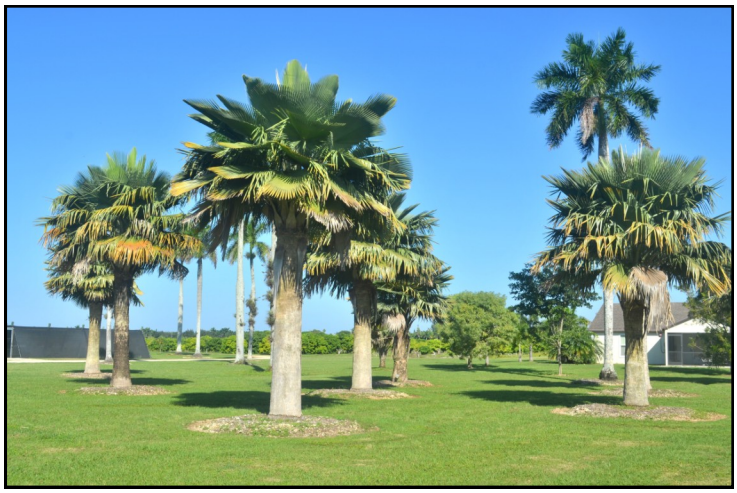
Licuala grandis (Botanics)

Macrozamia moorei on pallet (Botanics)

Grouping of *Coccothrinax borhidiana* with *Rhapis multifida* in background (Botanics)

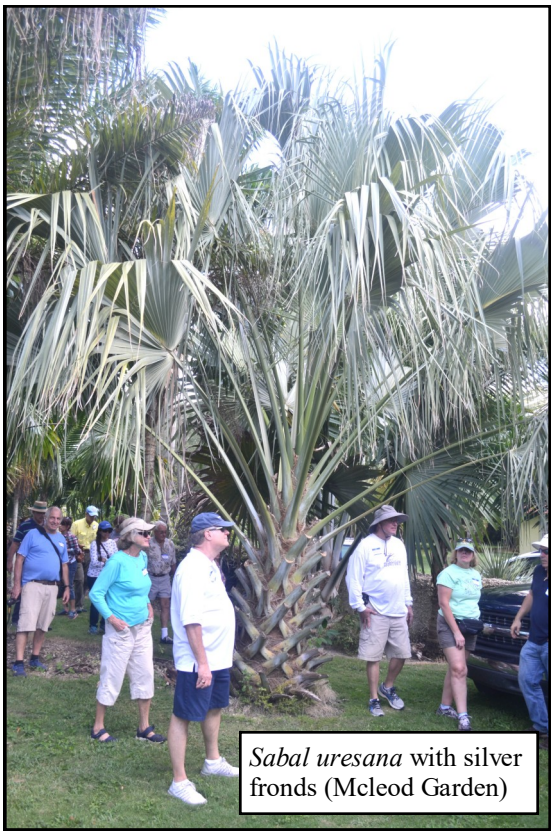
Ceratozamia mexicana (Botanics)

Encephalartos villosus on pallet (Botanics)



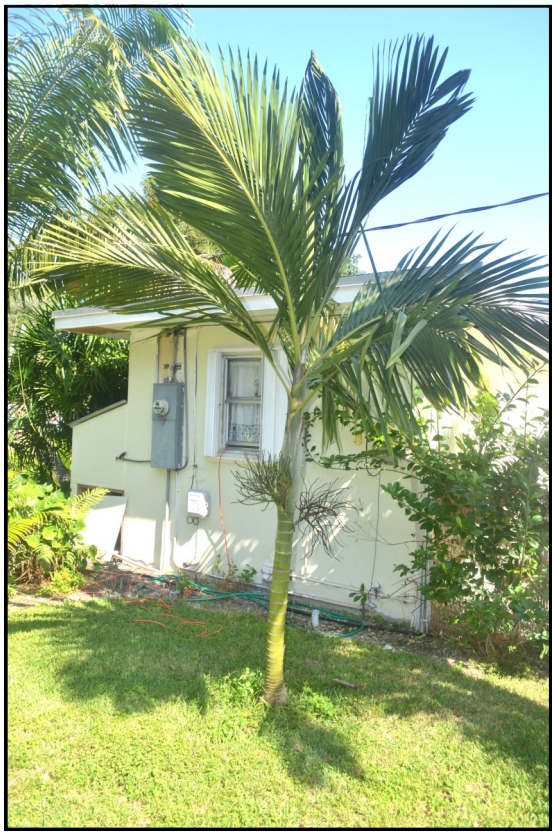
Relocated *Copernicia baileyana* (TREC)

Livistona carinensis
(above & below) McLeod Garden



Sabal uresana with silver fronds (Mcleod Garden)

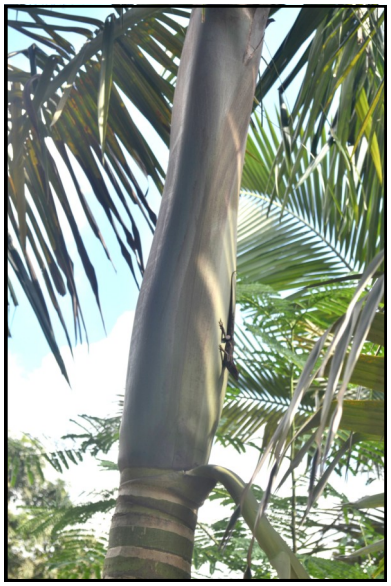
Elvis Cruz with *Tahina spectabilis (*below)
McLeod Garden



Cyphophoenix nucele (above) McLeod Garden
Copernicia fallaensis (below) TREC

Syagrus sancona (above) McLeod Garden
Copernicia baileyana (below) TREC

Baobab Tree re-rooted after being knocked over by Hurricane Andrew in 1992 (TREC)



Archontophoenix purpurea (McLeod Garden)

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Affiliate of the International Palm Society

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