Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

Affiliate of the International Palm Society

Monthly Update September 2013

UPCOMING MEETINGS

September 4, 2013

6:30 p.m. Board Meeting
7:30 p.m. General Meeting
Speaker: Paul Craft
Subject: International Palm Society 2012 Biennial to Thailand

SEPTEMBER FEATURED AUCTION PLANTS

Calyptrocalyx elegans var. boalak
Pinanga coronate (blunt leaf form)
Kentiopsis oliviformis
Calyptrogyne gheisbreghtiana
Calyptrocalyx sp. sanumb
Fiji Dwarf Coconut
(See photos on page 8)

Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society
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Appointees

Charlie Beck, Librarian
Ruth Lynch, Refreshment Chairman
Brenda Beck, Web Master and Historian

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

AUGUST THANK YOU

Food:	Steve Aberbach, Charlie Beck, Lew & Kathy Burger, Ruth & Terry Lynch, Rod & Kathy Silverio, Angela Valero
Plant Donations:	Charlie Beck, Steve Garland, Dale Holton
Door:	Brenda Beck
Other Donation:	Bob Grimm: various publications, videos, and posters

FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Encephalartos kisambo*

by Charlie Beck

Encephalartos kisambo is a large cycad native to Kenya. It was discovered in 1970, was named in 1977, and was officially described in 1989. Its native habitat is restricted to an area estimated to be only 400 acres. It occurs at elevations of 2,600-3,400' in partial shade on dry bushland. In 2003 it was estimated that only 5,200 individual plants remained in habitat. *E. kisambo* is considered endangered due to land clearing for subsistence farming and charcoal production.

E. kisambo is a large cycad with stems which can reach 7' tall and grow 2' in diameter. Leaves can measure up to 12' long. This cycad rarely suckers from the base so it has a neat appearance. Cones are yellow to orange and are very attractive. The base of the rachis is swollen and leaf scars are diamond shaped. This cycad is most closely related to *E. hildebrandtii*.

We have a single specimen of *E. kisambo* planted in our garden. It was planted 18 years ago and has grown a stem which measures 28" in diameter and 2' tall. The leaves measure 9' long and the cones are 2' long. Our specimen is planted in full sun in an area which floods after repeated heavy rainfall. Even though its native habitat is dry and lightly shaded, our plant seems to thrive in moist soil and full sun.

Back in 1995, I was not familiar with this cycad. It was only scientifically described 6 years prior to its planting in our garden. Dale Holton was probably the first nurseryman in the area to sell this cycad. Dale still offers this plant for sale at our sponsor, Holton Nursery. I gave it a try and I've been rewarded with a stand-out plant. Dale told me that *E. kisambo* is one of the top three *Encephalartos* species which can be grown in Palm Beach County. The other two species that rival *E. kisambo* in vigor are *E. gratus* and *E. hildebrandtii*. I would add *E. ferox* to that list. Norm Moody had a beautiful specimen of *E. kisambo* growing in full shade. This cycad reportedly grows much faster in full sun. It flushes new leaves more often and cones quicker in full sun but Norm's plant in full shade was sure impressive.

We are lucky that *E. kisambo* is still available for sale in our area. This is a cycad that can be a focal point in your garden. It is a strong grower in our sandy soils. It looks good at any size but is really impressive when mature. It grows well in sun or shade, and both dry or moist soil. It has never displayed micro-nutritional deficiency in our garden when fertilized at the recommended rate. I'm sure that Norm Moody's specimen was rarely fertilized with more than composted horse manure, and his plant looked great. The colorful cones draw attention and minimal suckering from the base translates to easy maintenance. If you have the room for this large cycad, I recommend that you buy yours before the supply is exhausted.

Cycas multipinnata x Cycas debaoensis

by Charlie Beck

I am not usually a fan of hybrid plants. I usually prefer to plant true species, but a few years ago I was lucky enough to obtain a cycad labeled *Cycas multipinnata* at our meeting auction. I was told that the mother plant was a true *C. multipinnata* but it might have cross pollinated with a *C. debaoensis*. Seed was produced at the Holton Nursery. Both *C. multipinnata* and *C. debaoensis* are closely related cycads which are native to China. Both display unique bipinnate leaf structure and both grow on limestone soil.

Well, this plant is definitely not a true species because it holds many more leaves that a true *C. multipinnata* which usually only holds one or two leaves. Both of these species are rare in habitat. *C. multipinnata* is reported to be near extinction and only an estimated 2,000 plants of *C. debaoensis* remain in the wild. If you like the look of this hybrid, they are still available for sale. I personally think it's more attractive than either of its parents. Our specimen is planted in highly alkaline shell rock which was brought in to provide a pad for our home. If you don't have an alkaline soil, I recommend yearly applications of dolomitic lime or amending the soil with pea gravel.

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Encephalartos kisambo

Photos by Charlie Beck

Petiole base

Specimen growing in full sun at the Beck garden.

Female Cones

LEFT: Specimen growing in full shade at Norm Moody's garden in 2011.

RIGHT: Diamond shaped leaf scars

***Cycas multipinnata* hybrid**

Cycas multipinnata hybrid

leaf detail

Cycas debaoensis **(Probable pollen donor)**

Boron Deficiency

Photos by Charlie Beck

Bentinckia nicobarica (Subsequently died)

Cocothrinax argentata (Grown on shell rock without irrigation)

Syagrus coronate hybrid (Has since recovered)

Copernicia baileyana recovering after Boron application (Notice stunted and bunched old leaves

Boron Deficiency is all around us

by Charlie Beck

I took a few photos of palms with Boron deficiency in our garden (See photos on page 4). See website http://www.edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep264 for examples of how this deficiency affects palms. This website explains that Boron deficiency is difficult to scientifically identify in palms because Boron is a transient element. Once you become familiar with the many symptoms of Boron deficiency, you can learn to recognize this problem. By applying Boron and noting the results, you can gain some confidence correcting this deficiency.

Boron deficiency occurs suddenly and it is often fatal if not addressed. I feel that this is THE major cause of palm death in our sandy soil. Sometimes it looks like frizzle top (manganese deficiency) but it can take many forms. I feel that research on this deficiency at IFAS is done on a limited number of palm species most of which are not likely to suffer from this deficiency. I've not noticed this affliction on coconuts or date palms, but many species that palm enthusiasts grow are highly susceptible.

The recommended fix for this problem is to dissolve 4 ounces of borax (20 Mule Team available at the supermarket) in a bucket of water and spread evenly on the root zone. Large palms with large root zones may need more. But be careful - too much Boron in the soil can be lethal to plants. Repeat the application after 5 months. The IFAS website discourages applying dry, granular Borax to the soil because it might burn the grass. I have applied it dry and had no problem with the lawn. Current recommendation of Boron in palm fertilizer is .05%-.15%. I prefer .15% or even more in fertilizer and believe more research will prove a higher percentage is better.

I have listed below many of the palm genera that have shown Boron deficiency in our garden. Not all species within the genus are susceptible.

- *Acoelorrhaphe*
- *Allagoptera* (*formerly Polyandrococos*)
- *Astrocaryum*
- *Attalea*
- *Beccariophoenix*
- *Bentinckia*
- *Butia*
- *Calyptronoma*
- *Caryota*
- *Coccothrinax*
- *Copernicia*
- *Cyphophoenix*
- *Dictyosperma*
- *Dypsis*
- *Elaeis*
- *Kerriodoxa*
- *Livistona*
- *Orania*
- *Pinanga*
- *Pseudophoenix*
- *Ravenea*
- *Rhapidophyllum*
- *Syagrus*

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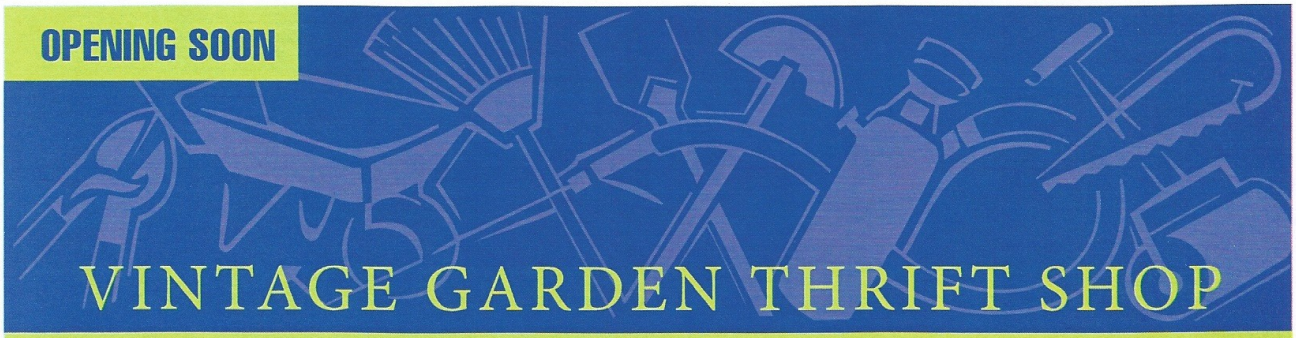
OPENING SOON



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All Donations benefit the non-profit Mounts Botanical Garden of Palm Beach County.
Every donation receives a 501(c)(3) Tax Deductible Receipt.

Roots in the Garden

Photos by Charlie Beck

Palm roots can add interest to the garden at ground level.

Ravenea rivularis

Phoenix theophrastii

Cocothrinax macroglosa

Raphia farinifera

Photos of September featured auction plants as grown in Palm Beach County

(Photos by Charlie Beck)

Kentiopsis oliviformis (last plant available of this species)

Pinanga coronate (Standard Form)*

Calyptrogyne gheisbreghtiana

Calyptrocalyx elegans var. boalak

Calyptrocalyx sp. sanumb

* Photo of blunt leaf form not available, however the blunt leaf form will be offered at the September auction.

Weed or Desirable Plant?

by Charlie Beck

A few years ago an interesting plant popped up among our roses in early summer. I planned on removing it but then I noticed Cloudless Sulphur butterflies landing on this plant. They were laying eggs on the new growth. Many more plants sprung up and before long I was rewarded with many of these butterflies which were attracted to these volunteer plants. The strange plants attracted the female butterflies and the females attracted the males. The butterfly eggs hatch and the caterpillars feast on the foliage and flowers until they form a chrysalis and metamorphose into more butterflies. Every day of summer I viewed clusters of pale yellow butterflies flitting about the garden.

Cloudless Sulphur butterflies are medium sized and range in color from pale yellow to medium yellow. They are native to South Florida and are quite common. I find them most numerous in the hot summer months.

There are many host plants for this butterfly. Some are native to Palm Beach County and some are exotic. The most popular native hosts are Partridge Pea (*Cassia fasciculate*) and Bahama Senna (*Cassia chapmanii*). Partridge Pea is small but is short lived and has never reproduced from seed in our garden. Bahama Senna is a small tree which does reproduce from seed but it takes up more space. The most popular exotic host plant is the Candle Plant (*Cassia alata*). This is a medium sized tree.

This volunteer plant is *Senna obtusifolia* or commonly named Sicklepod. Sicklepod is an exotic plant native to Central and South America. It is an upright plant which grows 4' tall and does not take up much space in the garden. It has yellow flowers. Seeds only germinate during the hot months of the year. In the cold months the plants disappear along with the butterflies. When temperatures rise so does a whole new generation of Sicklepods plants. This plant has naturalized over a large area of the our country. I found reference to it on an Illinois Wildflower website.

I know Sicklepod is not a palm or a cycad but it can attract butterflies to your garden and what garden couldn't be enhanced by clusters of yellow butterflies flitting about? At an upcoming meeting I'll bring some seed pods for anyone who might want to try this plant. All you have to do is sprinkle the seeds about on clear soil. No irrigation or fertilization is required. These plants do need well drained soil. They have never occurred on areas that flood in our garden. They are short lived but they reproduce from seed as long as the temperatures are high. I recommend that you plant them near a patio or sitting area so you can enjoy these butterflies up close.

Flowers and seedpods

Sicklepod plant

Cloudless sulphur butterfly

Sicklepod seedling

Comparison of Giant Palmate Fronds

Corypha umbraculifera without boot (left)
Borrasus aethiopum with boot (center)
Bismarckia nobilis with boot (right)
Tape measure in center is extended to 20 feet.