



Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

Affiliate of the International Palm Society

Monthly Update

December 2017

“THANK YOU”

Door: Dave Colonna & Don Bittel
Auction: Don Bittel & Terry Lynch

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DON'T MISS IT!

Our Annual Holiday Party And Plant Giveaway

(Sorry - members only)

Wednesday,
December 6, 2017
At Mounts Botanical Garden

5:00 p.m. - Doors Open
6:00 p.m. - Pot Luck Dinner
7:00 p.m. - Giveaway Begins

Please bring a main dish,
side dish, or dessert
And a plant donation
(of any kind) for the giveaway

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

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FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Pritchardia pacifica*
by Charlie Beck

Pritchardia pacifica is a palm most closely related to the American genera *Acoelorrhaphe*, *Brahea*, *Copernicia*, and *Serenoa*. It is also related to Asian/Pacific genera *Johannesteijsmannia*, *Licuala*, and *Livistona*. Its flat, palmate fronds have stiff leaf tips similar to *Copernicia baileyana* and the emerald green color of *Licuala grandis*. You can clearly see a resemblance of *P. pacifica* to other desirable genera.

Although its common name is the Fiji Fan Palm, the actual origin of *P. pacifica* has not been determined. Naturalized populations have been found throughout the South and West Pacific islands, but its occurrence is thought to be due to cultivation. Buoyant seeds might also be a factor in its widespread distribution from its place of origin.

P. pacifica is the most commonly cultivated species of its genera. It is widely planted throughout the tropics. Donald Hodel, palm taxonomist and *Pritchardia* expert, states that non-native *P. pacifica* is more common in Hawaiian urban landscapes than

any of the 24 native species. The reason for its popularity is clear - it is an incredibly beautiful palm!

P. pacifica is a solitary, medium sized palm. Stems can grow 45' tall and measure 10" in diameter. Fronds are green on both sides and measure about 4' across. Leaf segments are mostly united. Petioles are unarmed. This is a monoecious palm which does not require cross pollination to produce viable seed. *P. pacifica* has small, blue-black, fruit which measures 1/2" in diameter. Its flowers are bright yellow.

P. pacifica inflorescence length is equal to, or shorter than, the fronds. General appearance of *P. pacifica* is similar to the equally attractive *P. thurstonii*. *P. thurstonii* can be distinguished by its much longer inflorescence which grows beyond its fronds and it's slightly smaller scale.

P. pacifica fell out of favor in South Florida back in the 1970's when Lethal Yellowing (LY) swept through the area killing many susceptible palms. Some of the palms most affected were *Cocos*

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Pritchardia pacifica - 24 years old in Caloosa
(Photo by Frank Genung)



Pritchardia pacifica - 6 years old
in Beck Garden

(Continued from page 2)

nucifera (Coconut Palm), *Adonidia merrillii* (Christmas Palm) and *P. pacifica* (Fiji Fan Palm). LY resistant Coconut Palms were bred, but the other affected palms were left on their own to either survive or die. For a long time enthusiasts were discouraged from planting susceptible species. Lately, there has been a resurgence in planting *Adonidia merrillii*. These palms must have been propagated from the survivors because they seem to be LY resistant. Hopefully the same applies to *P. pacifica* which are now offered for sale. We haven't lost any *P. pacifica* in our garden due to LY.

P. pacifica is a very attractive palm at all stages of development. Once planted and established, it quickly produces a round crown of emerald green fronds. In Palm Beach County (PBC), it might be the fastest growing *Pritchardia* species. Although fronds are not self-cleaning, palms only hold a few dried leaves which can easily be removed. It's adaptable to growing on a variety of soil types - sand, marl and limestone. It appreciates regular irrigation and fertilization. In our garden I've never noticed any micro-nutritional deficiencies. It's also salt tolerant and wind resistant. I've seen healthy, mature specimens growing on Jupiter Island.

Some older reference books recommend planting *P. pacifica* in USDA Plant Hardiness Zone 11, but newer books recommend Zone 10B. No doubt a freeze such as the one in 1989, when temperatures dipped to 26°F, would not bode well for this palm. In our garden (4 miles inland) *P. pacifica* showed little effect from the cold winters of 2009 & 2010.

I recently received photos of a 25-30' tall *P. pacifica* thriving in Caloosa which is a neighborhood located 12 miles inland in northern PBC. This neighborhood is right down the road from Pratt & Whitney. The palm was planted in 1993 and in 2017 it measures 25-30' tall. It was strategically planted in a micro-climate surrounded by a pond, a pool and the SE corner of a house. The soil in this area is a sand/marl mix. I was surprised that *P. pacifica* could thrive this far west (see photo page 2)

Lethal Yellowing is less common than in the past. Other susceptible palms are widely planted and are thriving. It's time for replanting South Florida with *P. pacifica*. This palm is the perfect scale for a standard lot size and its tropical look will remind you of Key West.



Pritchardia pacifica
at Deerfield Beach Arboretum



Pritchardia pacifica
Leaf detail

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Palms & Global Warming by John Kennedy

The President says that global warming is a ‘Chinese hoax’ to discredit capitalism. Others believe that it is a conspiracy/plot by thousands of climate scientists. I won’t argue what looks like a political dispute. But I do have a question, or two.

Do palms believe in the ‘Chinese hoax’? Or are they in cahoots with the climate scientists?

Looking at my palms, I realize that I have species that were completely out of the question in the 1980s, when I started out. In the 1980s (and ‘90s) Vero Beach could expect about 4 episodes of freezing weather every winter. The culmination was the Christmas [Eve] Freeze of 1989, when the temperature dropped to 18° in my yard. Water in the birdbath frozen, of course. Three more freezing nights followed. Daytime high temperatures, if I recall correctly, were in the 40s. Ordinary winter temperatures — lows in the 50s, highs in the 70s — returned 4 days later.

All of Vero Beach stank for a month of decaying crotons, bougainvillea, ixora, as well as coconut palms everywhere. At the time, I figured that coconut palms had a life expectancy here of about five years, that when they inevitably died, the owners could go back to Walmart to buy new coconuts. Nursery owners went to Jacksonville to buy plants to sell after all their tropicals went to glory. My two *Cleyera japonica* shrubs date from that time. There was a renewed interest in *Rhapis* species and, for a while, ill-fated *Trachycarpus* (which died after getting to 6 feet) and unfortunate *Chamaerops* (some of which survived).

I bought a small *Veitchia arecina* a year or so later, assured by the vendor — Paul Craft?— at the Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society’s fall sale, that it was a quick grower, that if it got to 6 feet — which would be quickly — was likely to survive any short-term freezes in the upper 20s. I wasn’t sure I believed this but hoped it was true. Yes, I covered it with a sheet during brief subsequent freezes. And, yes, it grew quickly to 6 feet, a crucial height after which covering becomes increasingly difficult.

Aside from two brief dips just to freezing in January 2014, the last real freeze at my house was in February 2011. After this 2011 freeze was over, the then 45 foot Montgomery Palm dropped its two oldest leaves and quickly put out replacements. It’s now a little over 50 feet high and, two years ago, bloomed for the first time, setting seed. In late summer I picked up the fruit, since I didn’t want any volunteers, just dropped maybe 30 in an empty plastic pot among the small potted stuff, and forgot about them. In the spring I noticed several small sprouts in the forgotten pot, pulled these out and potted them. Eventually, nearly all germinated — in no soil, just some light covering by drifted down tree leaves. (Have I discovered a new method of germination?)

On the property next door, the owner two back (four owners since it was built in 1981, after our

house) planted two Solitaire Palms (*Ptychosperma elegans*), common enough in Palm Beach County but unheard of in Indian River County. He was a driveway contractor, had been given these somewhere in the early ‘90s. The palm planted out in the open died in a subsequent freeze. The other, however, grew up into the shelter of an upright ‘Little Gem’ magnolia which shielded its crown from the freezes. It is now about 35 feet high, healthy, and has survived hurricanes and total neglect.

I’ve recently seen *Veitchias* about 10 feet high planted surrounding a new elder-care facility, at least 20 of them. Not sure which species, probably *Veitchia joannis*, which I’ve written about previously growing here in an old, sheltered neighborhood. I should also note that I have several other species of *Veitchias*: *V. filifera* (4 feet high), *V. spiralis* (20 feet), *V. joannis* (3 feet, from seed).

What about *Ptychosperma*? Not a genus seen here back in freezing winters. But I was given, somewhere in the ‘90s, a small *P. microcarpum*, and planted it with little expectation that it would be around all that long. It was a seedling from a group of these in the atrium of a house. This palm is now 25 feet high, didn’t look good for a while, then grew into partial shelter of two trees, a bald cypress and a yellow-flowered *Tabebuia*. Now I also have an amazingly skinny *Ptychosperma*, 15 feet high, no suckers. Don’t recall what the tag said at a palm sale, maybe “*Ptychosperma* sp.” I thought, for a while that I had *P. waitianum*, pleased since I had known Lucita Wait— until someone more knowledgeable looked at it and said no, but then couldn’t identify it. That’s when I learned that *Ptychosperma* are completely promiscuous, so Lord knows what anybody has. I also have two small individuals (not more than 4 feet high), both clumpers, one with a red new leaf.

There’s also a small clumper, *Mauritiella armata* — from the Amazon — that has formed no trunks but is still alive. Where did I buy this? From Richard Moyroud’s nursery in Palm Beach County? Of course, the initially daring genus venturing into the Arctic areas of Indian River County was *Archontophoenix*, species *cunninghamiana*, particularly in the form ‘Illawarra’ said to be more cold-hardy than the species (not true). And now I have five more species of the genus: *A. purpurea*, *A. myolensis*, *A. maxima*, *A. alexandrae*, *A. tuckeri*. Three are in the canopy, the three others are working on getting there.

OK, *Carpentaria acuminata*. No. Enough. And the coconut palms in Vero now are looking, well, mature. Not cut down in their adolescence by Father Frost (to use a Russian term for Santa Claus). Bearing coconuts—to the danger of passersby!

If you are growing some formerly too tender palm species for your area, let me know what you

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(Continued from page 4)

have. I remember a palm book some years back that said that Bismarck Palms could not be grown north of Palm Beach County--when I was starting to see them in Orlando!

Hurray for the 'Chinese hoax'!

Happy Holidays!

Favorite Palms

Last month I posed the following question:-
If you could plant only a single species of palm around your home and your garden area was 2 acres in size, which palm would you plant?
These are the answers.



Ruth Lynch

Here is my entry for the one single palm I would choose...

I know *Cyrtostachys renda* is not a unique choice for favorite palm, but after enjoying it for years, I swore off owning another 'Lipstick Palm' after losing ours to the extra cold winter temperatures a few years back and was resigned to only enjoy this palm in true tropical locales and gardens.

So I have visited, admired and even photographed the *Cyrtostachys renda* 'Theodora Buhler' in the Rare Plant House at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden many times. This 'Theodora Buhler' variation has a stunning crown shaft of striated coloring of all the Fall colors. I have been told by the docents that Fairchild received the palm as a gift from Mrs. Buhler when she moved away from Miami many years ago. Mrs. Buhler had selected the palm as a sport out of a tray of seedlings she grew, to keep for herself. Fairchild staff has not successfully propagated this only specimen.

A gorgeous palm with a story!

(Photo by Ruth Lynch)



John Kennedy

You ask about favorite palms, mine, not surprisingly: *Alagoptera arenaria*--have two old ones (more than 30 years old) and a youngish small one. I must admit that I enjoy them more when they don't have 5-foot trunks, as my two big ones now do. I also have a fondness for *Archontophoenix myolensis*--for sturdiness, surviving when young a snapped crownshaft (then 15 ft. high), developing a new one. And it's very pretty, has produced much seed that germinated seedlings given away in my palm talks and to my students.

(Photo by John Kennedy)

Favorite Palms

Charlie Beck

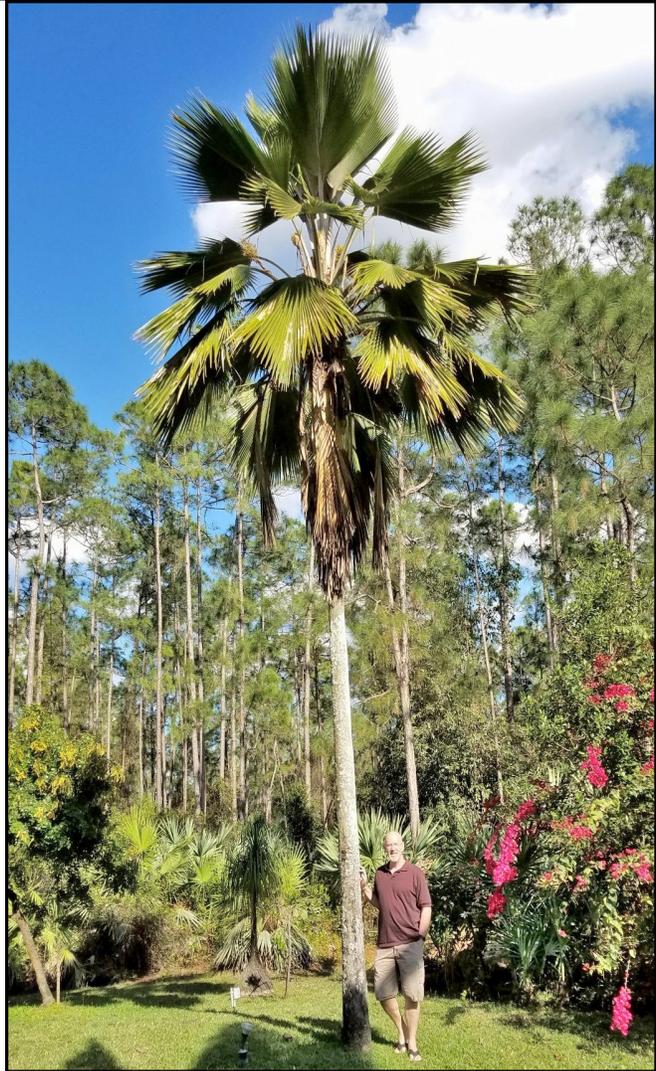
I narrowed my favorite palm choice to the 3 large *Copernicia* species:- *C. baileyana* , *C. fal-laensis*, & *C. gigas*. Having to pick one, I chose *C. baileyana*. I like the massive stem and crown of stiff fronds. I enjoy how the leaf tips quiver in the wind. *C. baileyana* color varies from green to silver green, so a garden filled with a single species would have some variety.

My other favorite palmate palm is *Pritchardia pacifica*.

My favorite pinnate palm is *Neoveitchia storckii* for its wide shiny leaflets and black crownshaft. Runner-up pinnate palm is *Hydriastele costata* for its pendent pinnae.



Copernicia baileyana in Cuba



Frank Genung lending scale to his favorite palm, *Pritchardia pacifica* (Photo by Frank Genung)

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South Florida Palm Society 2017 Spring Garden Tour

The South Florida Palm Society toured three gardens in the Miami area last spring. One garden was a mature garden and the other two were started more recently. All three gardens had an interesting variety of palms, but the two younger gardens were planted with a focus on the owner's favorite genus.

Larry Page established his garden back in the 1970's. Larry still introduces new species to his palm collection but the most impressive palms were the

mature specimens. Larry regularly fertilizes newly planted palms but seldom feeds his older palms. He didn't want to promote growth in his largest palms. Mature specimens of *Livistona rigida*, *Borassus aethiopicum*, and *Pseudophoenix vinifera* were impressive. The *Syagrus coronata* had a tall stem with a length of well preserved, five ranked, spiraling leafbases.

The Manny Prieguez Garden was a celebra-

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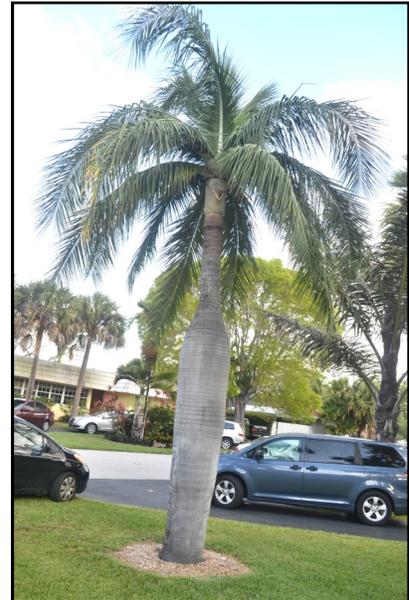
Larry Page Garden, Palmetto Bay, FL



Borassus aethiopicum



Livistona rigida



Pseudophoenix vinifera



Syagrus coronata



Caryota zebrina



Heterospatha intermedia

Manny Prieguez Garden, Miami, FL



Pritchardia kaalea



Pritchardia napaliensis



Cocos nucifera - Fiji Dwarf



Areca vestiaria



Areca catechu - Dwarf



Copernicia fallaensis

Manny Prieguez Garden, Miami, FL



Johannesteijsmannia altifrons



Copernicia yarey



Copernicia gigas



Pritchardia thurstonii



Pritchardia mitiaroana



Pritchardia hillebrandii

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tion of the genus, *Pritchardia*. Manny had an impressive collection of *Pritchardia* species, some of which are rarely seen in South Florida. Manny was also fond of the genus, *Copernicia*. He had an impressive specimen of *Copernicia gigas*. Tender exotics such as *Areca vestiaria* and *Johannesteijsmannia altifrons* looked quite healthy.

The Laz Prieguez Garden had a varied collection of palms, but *Copernicia* was obviously his favorite genus. Laz's enthusiasm for *Copernicia* spilled out

beyond his garden limits. He obtained permission from his neighbors to plant along the sidewalk. Various *Copernicia* species were planted streetside blocks away from his home. Laz keeps the palms trimmed so not to block the walkway. It looks impressive now, and will only improve with age. Laz's collection also included many rare palms including *Basselinia pancheri* and *Kentiopsis piersoniorum*.

It's always interesting to compare notes with palm enthusiasts in the Miami area. With slightly

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Laz Priegues Garden, Miami, FL



Copernicia baileyana



Copernicia rigida



Copernicia glabrescens



Copernicia yarey



Coccothrinax borhidiana
(street planting)

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warmer winters and drastically different, alkaline soil, some palms outperform ones grown here in PBC. The palette of palms that can be successfully grown can be quite different.

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Email cycadnut@gate.net




"By appointment only"

Miami, FL Street Planting by Laz Priegues
Variety of Copernicia species
(3 photos below)



Basselinia pancheri
Laz Priegues Garden



Kentiopsis piersoniorum
Laz Priegues Garden



Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

Affiliate of the International Palm Society

2018 Membership Application

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Y	

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