



Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

Affiliate of the International Palm Society

Monthly Update

April 2010

FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Acrocomia aculeata*



Acrocomia aculeata with fruit



Acrocomia aculeata spiny trunk

FRONT COVER: *Acrocomia aculeata* growing in the Beck garden.
(Photo by Charlie Beck)

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FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Acrocomia aculeata*

by Charlie Beck

Acrocomia aculeata is a widespread palm naturally occurring on Caribbean Islands, Mexico, Central and South America. It grows from sea level up to an elevation of 3,500 feet. Several species of *Acrocomia* were described prior to 1995 when Henderson lumped all of the tall varieties into one species, *A. aculeata*. Recently, *Gastrococos crispus* was reclassified as *Acrocomia crispus*. Due to Henderson's lumping in 1995, there could be variability in growth rate and cold hardiness of this species, but all of the *A. aculeata* I have observed in South Florida and in our travels abroad looked similar in appearance.

This is a graceful pinnate palm with plumose leaves. The crown size is somewhat larger than a *Veitchia* but smaller than a Royal Palm. The frond count is exceptionally high and rivals some *Phoenix* palms. The

crown forms a full sphere of living fronds – even those that hang down vertically. All parts of this palm are very spiny. Our specimen is self-cleaning and even though the fronds are long, they are not heavy enough to damage underplantings as do Coconuts and Royals. This palm is the fastest growing palm in our garden – faster than *Roystoneas*, *Veitchias*, and *Carpentaria*. Our specimen was planted 13 years ago and quickly grew 40 feet tall with 13 foot long fronds with a 12 inch diameter stem. Most of its growth occurred early on and growth is now beginning to slow down.

A. aculeata was unaffected by our record setting cold winter. It showed no damage from the three hurricanes it weathered. It is flood resistant but occurs naturally in areas with seasonal rainfall so it is also drought tolerant. Our specimen is planted in full sun. Even though this monoecious palm has been producing seed for many years, it is not weedy like *Veitchias* which produce hundreds of seedlings under each palm.

If you like spiny palms, this is a good palm to plant. It is well adapted to

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(561) 586-2332



LAKE OSBORNE ANIMAL CLINIC

JOHN T. LYNCH, D.V.M.

1502 Lake Osborne Dr.
Lake Worth, FL 33461

Cold Damage Observations

by Charlie Beck

On March 14, I ventured to Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden to observe the effects of our record cold winter. I heard that nurseries in Homestead had temperatures that dropped into the 20's on several occasions and that the *Pigafettas* and *Metroxylons* were killed during their first freeze. Fairchild should have been appreciably warmer than Homestead due to its proximity to the bay. Fairchild's lowest winter temperature was 31 degrees F.

The only apparent damage in the Rare Plant House was in the unheated screened section. The

beautiful mature *Manicaria saccifera* was fried. This is a clumping palm so it might recover but it looked dead. Just last Spring, I bought a *Manicaria* after seeing Fairchild's specimen growing so well. My potted specimen was also the first casualty in our Palm Beach County garden even though it was protected by shade cloth.

I observed Fairchild's two *Metroxylon* specimens (approximately 10 feet tall) growing 12 feet apart. One looked fine and the other had a collapsed spear leaf.

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growing in Palm Beach County. It would be a good substitute for *Wodyetia bifurcata* which are prone to nutritional deficiencies. The "foxtail" look can be obtained with the less commonly planted *A. aculeata*.

GROWING CONDITIONS IN OUR GARDEN FOR <i>Acrocomia aculeata</i>	
Location	4 miles from ocean in suburban Lantana
Soil	Sand over a layer of hardpan (pineland flatwood habitat)
Irrigation	¾ inch applied twice a week
Flooding	Periodic inundation in sandy soil acceptable
Fertilization	3 times a year with Palm special analysis
Light	Sun
Micronutrient Deficiencies	None observed
Insect Damage	None observed
Hurricane Resistance	Excellent



Palm Beach Palm and Cycad Society



presents its Annual Spring

Show & Sale



Saturday, April 10, - 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Sunday, April 11 - 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Caloosa Park
Located in Boynton Beach at the end of 35th Ave.
(east side of Congress Ave. between Atlantic Ave.
and Woolbright Rd.)

Over 500 species of Palms & Cycads
of all shapes and sizes,
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NO ADMISSION CHARGE

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

For more information and to volunteer some time,
please call Tom Ramiccio
(561) 386-7812

*Please share your garden experiences.
Submit your stories and photos to beck4212@aol.com*

This Month's "Thank You"

General Membership Meeting Refreshments

Maryann Marinaro Lauren & Patrick Urrutia
Mick and Sue Pepler Gary & Bonnie Wilburn
Tom Ramiccio

Plant Donations

Jack Dewey David McLean
Dale Holton

Special Thanks

to
Maryann Marinaro
for arriving at 5:00 p.m. to keep the Mounts building open for us.

Winner of the January 6th Name Drawing Prize
was **Brad Chamness**
who was not present. He missed out on receiving a copy of
Betrock's Cold Hardy Palms by Alan W. Meerow.

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Palm Beach Palm
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c/o Brenda Beck
P.O. Box 21-2228
Royal Palm Beach, FL 33421
(Check must be received prior to print.)

UPCOMING MEETINGS

GENERAL MEETING

Date: Wednesday, April 7, 2010
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Location: Mounts Botanical Garden
Subject: Video Presentation: Jeff Marcus' Virtual Garden Tour

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING


Date: Wednesday, April 28, 2010
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Location: Ruth Sallenbach's Home
6285 S. Military Trail, Lake Worth
(561) 965-5430

HOLTON NURSERY
PALMS and CYCADS
5221 3rd Road
Lake Worth, FL 33467
Phone (561) 965-6792
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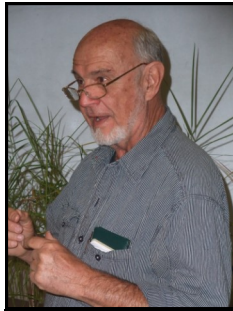
Mike Harris
1584 F Road
Loxahatchee, FL 33470
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RX For Cold-Damaged Palms

by Brenda Beck

In March 2009, David McLean was our guest speaker to give us some information regarding caring for our plants before and after cold weather. After our unusually cold winter this year, he was invited back to speak at our March 2010 meeting to give us a refresher. Mr. McLean recommended the following:


- When cold is approaching, give all plants a thorough watering and make certain the ground is wet.
- A week after cold weather has subsided, drench your plants with SUPERthrive and a ¼ strength application of water soluble fertilizer
- Two or three weeks later, give your plants a foliar feed
- Two or three weeks later, fertilize your plants with a 8-4-12 Palm Special fertilizer
- A few months later, continue with your regular fertilization
- In the summer, he recommended an application of a trace element mix such as Micromax and an application of SUPERthrive (a vitamin-hormone supplement).



David McLean

For cold-damaged plants, Mr. McLean recommended a worm tea drench and an application of organic fertilizer. Also, treat plants with copper to fight fungus, but he cautioned that copper will kill bromeliads and orchids so take care when spraying.

Mr. McLean suggested several ways to protect palms from the cold. First, avoid planting cold-sensitive plants where they will be exposed to northwest winds by planting them on the east or south side of your house. Also, consider planting your plants where they will get some residual heat from black top or a building. You can also cluster palms as a screen or plant palms under a canopy that will protect understory plants from freeze. He also suggested species selection to ensure you plant palms that will survive cold snaps, such as the native needle palm (*Rhapidophyllum hystrix*).



Village Marina

464-4391 Wes Taylor



Cold-damaged *Licuala grandis* in John Greenleaf's Miami garden.

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Similarly, our *Metroxylon*, two years in the ground and growing well, also succumbed to the cold.


The *Orania sylvicola* growing at the bottom of the hill in Fairchild's rainforest also had a collapsed spear leaf. It is planted just behind the tall *Borrassus aethhiopium*.

I was surprised to see so much damage to *Licuala grandis*. I observed many eight foot tall specimens with stunted and dying new growth. I also noticed this damage on several of our *L. grandis* in our Palm Beach County garden. *Licuala peltata*, *L. lauterbachii*, *L. longipes*, and *L. ramsayi* all seemed unaffected by the

cold winter temperatures in our garden and at Fairchild.

I think that last winter's extended low temperatures were more damaging to our palm collection than was the record 1989 freeze, even though low temperatures were never below 33 degrees in our garden. It was interesting to observe so much variability in cold tolerance within a

species. Some palms were unaffected and some were fried growing in the same proximity. It seems that every 20 years we experience a killing freeze or a hurricane, but these events pass. We can continue to replant the palms we appreciate and enjoy them while we can.



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BETTY AHLBORN

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Exotic Palms
&
Tropicals

COLD SURVIVORS AT FAIRCHILD TROPICAL BOTANICAL GARDEN



Licuala longipes



Licuala peltata var. *sumawongii*



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P.O. Box 21-2228
Royal Palm Beach, FL 33421



Fairchild Cold Survivor
Licuala ramsayi