



# Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

*Affiliate of the International Palm Society*

Monthly Update

March 2011

## FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Pseudophoenix sargentii*



*Pseudophoenix sargentii* var. *navassana* displaying waxy stem and widely spaced leaf scars. (Photo by Charlie Beck)

**FRONT COVER:** Eight year old *Phoenix sargentii* var. *navassana* in foreground with slower growing varieties in background. (Photo by Charlie Beck)

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**FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Pseudophoenix sargentii***

by Charlie Beck

*Pseudophoenix sargentii* is one of Florida's eleven native palms. It is one of our two native palms with a crownshaft. It is easy to distinguish from the other crownshaft palm (*Roystonea regia*) which is much larger.

*Pseudophoenix sargentii* is a solitary, monoecious palm. It holds an open crown of pinnate leaves which can measure up to 8 feet long. The stems can grow 25 feet tall and measure up to one foot in diameter. In habitat, it is usually found along the coast in alkaline soil. The fruit is red, hence the common name "cherry palm." Another common name is "Buccaneer Palm." The crownshaft is bluish to gray-green and measures one to two feet long. This palm grows best in full sun.

There are two subspecies of *P. sargentii*. Subspecies *sargentii* is native to Florida, Mexico, and Belize. Subspecies *saonae* is native to

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the Bahamas, Hispaniola, and Cuba. Subspecies *saonae* is then broken down to two varieties. One of these varieties is *navassana* which is found on Navassa Island located off the coast of Haiti. This variety, *navassana*, is pictured on the front cover and is featured this month.

Why would anyone seek out this particular subspecies and variety? Fast growth is the answer. Also, the undersides of the leaves are silver. *P. sargentii* is notorious for slow growth but this variety is several times faster growing. The large palm on the front cover was planted

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**GROWING CONDITIONS IN OUR GARDEN  
 FOR *Pseudophoenix sargentii***

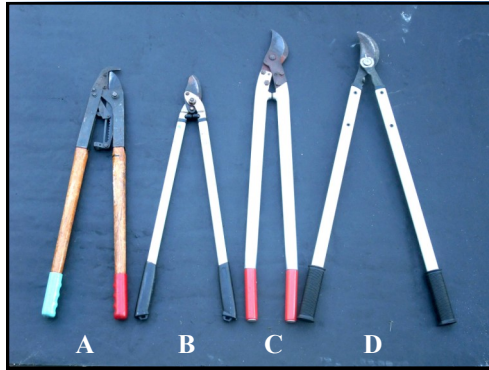
|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Location                   | 4 miles from ocean in suburban Lantana    |
| Soil                       | Alkaline soil is best, well drained sand  |
| Irrigation                 | ¾ inch applied twice a week               |
| Fertilization              | 4 times a year with Palm special analysis |
| Light                      | Full sun                                  |
| Micronutrient Deficiencies | None observed                             |
| Insect Damage              | None observed                             |
| Hurricane Resistance       | Excellent                                 |

## A Comparison of Lopping Shears

by Charlie Beck

Every palm gardener needs a good pair of lopping shears. Lopping shears are great for pruning reachable desiccated fronds. There are two types of lopping shears – bypass and anvil. The bypass type cuts with an action like scissors. The anvil type shears cut like a bolt cutter where the blade and the anvil come in close contact but never meet.

I have bought many types of lopping shears over the years and would like to share some of my experience. The picture to the right shows four different lopping shears. The cost of these shears vary greatly.



|   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
| A | Florian Maxi Lopper<br>Anvil Ratchet Cut<br>Retail: \$189<br>Cut Capacity: 2 inch diameter<br>Length: 28 inches<br>Weight: 3 lb. 8 oz.           | C | Felco Model 22<br>Single Pivot Bypass Cut<br>Retail: \$202 Discount \$131<br>Cut Capacity: 1.8 inch diameter<br>Length: 33 inches<br>Weight: 4 lb. 6 oz.               |
| B | Village Blacksmith<br>Compound Action Bypass Cut<br>Retail: \$29<br>Cut Capacity: 1.6 inch diameter<br>Length: 27 inches<br>Weight: 2 lb. 10 oz. | D | Fred Marvin "Garden of Eden"<br>Single Pivot Bypass Cut<br>Retail: \$69 Discount: \$45<br>Cut Capacity: 2.25 inch diameter<br>Length: 33 inches<br>Weight: 3 lb. 8 oz. |

Lopping shear A has a ratchet cut mechanism which greatly increases leverage. You have to repeatedly open and close the handles to complete the cut. When the handles open, they open widely and require a lot of clearance and, therefore, will not work in close quarters. The ratchet anvil system is designed to cut hardwood so it fails to cut springy palm petioles. This lopping shear often binds when cutting hard wood and it is difficult to complete the cut.

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## UPCOMING MEETINGS

### GENERAL MEETING

**Date:** Wednesday, March 2, 2011  
**Time:** 7:30 p.m.  
**Location:** Mounts Botanical Garden  
**Subject:** Jeff Marcus Hawaiian Garden Tour Internet Presentation

### EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

**Date:** Wednesday, March 30, 2011  
**Time:** 7:00 p.m.  
**Location:** Ruth Sallenbach's Home  
 6285 S. Military Trail, Lake Worth  
 (561) 965-5430

### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

No new members in February

### Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society Membership

Be sure to keep your membership up to date. It will insure that you receive all Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society communications. Annual membership is \$25 per person per year and membership runs from January 1 to December 31. Membership can be renewed by sending payments to the Society at P.O. Box 21-2228, Royal Palm Beach, FL 33421.

Thank you for your support of the Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society. We hope to see you at all of our general meetings which take place on the first Wednesday of every month at Mounts Botanical Garden in West Palm Beach. Be sure to watch for information regarding our field trips, special activities, and palm and cycad shows and sales.

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The anvil blade requires precise alignment to operate properly. I do not recommend this lopping shear to the palm gardener.

Lopping shear B is the typical box store offering. It has a bypass blade with a compound pivot mechanism. This compound system multiplies leverage but is prone to binding and is not as durable as a single pivot. The light weight is a positive feature but the cutting capacity is inadequate to cut through large fronds.

Lopping shear C is considered the king of professional lopping shears. All replacement parts are available for purchase online. The handles are solid aluminum. It is a heavy pruner but the durability is excellent. I have owned this pruner for 20 years and it still works like new. When I cut through petioles like Coconut and Royals, I wedge one handle on the ground and use my body weight to complete the cut. Another positive feature of this shear is that the handles do not require as much space to open due to close proximity of the handles in the closed position. The hand grips are well attached and are very durable. This is a lopping shear which should last several lifetimes. The only drawback is that the cutting capacity could be a little larger.

Lopping shear D is one I bought recently because I misplaced my Felco in the garden. I didn't

want to spend the \$131 Felco discount price because I know I would eventually find the lost lopping shear. I found this Fred Marvin pruner online for \$45 plus shipping. It has a whopping 2 ¼ inch cutting capacity. The handles are hollow aluminum so I am not sure about their long term durability. The hand

grips are a rubber compound and they occasionally slide on the aluminum handles. I've lost the rubber bumper which protects your hands from colliding when closing the handles but replacement bumpers are available online for \$2.50. An-

other drawback of this lopper is that the handles require ample room to open due to its generous spacing in the closed position. Even with all of the previously mentioned negative aspects, I would recommend this shear. The 2 ¼ inch cutting capacity is super and so far the handles have held up to my "ground contact – body weight" method of cutting. I'm not sure of its long term durability but so far – so good, and its \$45 price is very attractive.

\*\*\*



Lopper D cutting through a Bismarkia frond with a single cut.

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## THIS MONTH'S "THANK YOU"

### PLANT DONATIONS

Marshall Dewey  
Dale Holton  
Norm Moody

### MEETING REFRESHMENTS

Kathy Burger  
Mary Ann & Jim Gallagher  
Ruth Lynch  
Patrick & Lauren Morris  
Tom Ramiccio  
Brenda Skaggs

### SPECIAL THANKS

to  
**Mary Ann & Jim Gallagher**  
for arriving at 5:00 p.m. to keep the Mounts building open for us.

Winner of the February 2nd Door Prize was  
**Linda Wiringer**  
who received a Palm Society T-Shirt.

*Please share your garden experiences.  
Submit your stories and photos to [beck4212@aol.com](mailto:beck4212@aol.com)*

## The Best Palms for South Florida

by Brenda Beck

At our February 2<sup>nd</sup> general meeting, Dale Holton discussed how to choose palms that will grow well in South Florida. He suggested that you consider the following before selecting a palm for your garden:

- If a palm's native growing conditions are similar to South Florida, the palm will grow well here. For example, consider if the palm is native to an area that has similar temperature, soil, rainfall, and humidity conditions.
- Choose a palm that will not grow too tall if you have a small garden.
- Generally, soil in our area consists of sand and usually has a high PH level. Choose palms that naturally grow in this type soil.

- A suitable palm should be able to handle short extreme temperatures with minimal damage.
- Palms that come from hurricane prone areas will probably remain standing if a hurricane hits our area.
- Finally, consider the palm's availability and price.

Dale reported that many *Coccothrinax* grow well in South Florida. *Coccothrinax* grow naturally in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Caribbean Isles, the United States, and Mexico. Unfortunately, only a select few are readily available at nurseries here in South Florida.

Dale's presentation included many outstanding photographs of *Coccothrinax* growing both locally and in their native habitat.

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(Continued from page 4)

eight years ago. The two smaller *P. sargentii* in the photo are two years younger but exhibit a much slower rate of growth. The larger palm (variety *navassana*) has a stem 4 1/2 feet tall and 8 inches in diameter. The smaller specimens are years away from forming a stem. These palms seem to prefer growing in alkaline soil. The stem of variety *navassana* displays an attractive waxy coating and leaf scars are spaced 6 to 7 inches apart indicating this palm's relatively fast growth rate.

All of the varieties of *P. sargentii* are very distinctive so you can't go wrong growing any of them. I would recommend growing these in a location with alkaline soil. Usually concrete home foundations create an alkaline zone close to the house. The medium size of this palm ensures that it will never be out of scale even next to a one story house. It is wind resistant and salt tolerant. It displays showy fruit and a waxy stem. On top of all these advantages – it's native too!

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## GARDEN TOUR

**February 26, 2011  
9:00 a.m. to Noon**

**Norm & Ann Moody's Garden  
7153 Wilson Road  
West Palm Beach**

Join us for a tour this outstanding 5 acre property. Norm & Ann Moody have more than 400 species of palms, approximately 30 species of cycads, hardwood trees, and more than 60 different kinds of edible fruit trees planted in this exquisite garden.

### Directions from Southern Boulevard:

South on Jog Road  
West on Pioneer Road  
Right at 1st Stop Sign (Cleary Rd.)  
Left on Wilson Road  
3173 is on the left

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# Show & Sale

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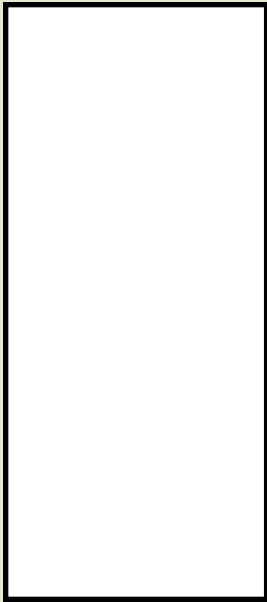


**LEFT:** *Dransfieldia micrantha* growing in the non-heated Fairchild Tropical Garden rare plant house. This palm was recently named in 2006 and is native to lowland rain-forest in New Guinea. Please see the back cover for a close-up of the stem.


(Photo by Charlie Beck)



*Dransfieldia micrantha* stem



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