



Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

Affiliate of the International Palm Society

Monthly Update

December 2012

FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Copernicia macroglossa*



Copernicia rigida growing at Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden.

All photographs in this issue were contributed by Charlie Beck.

FRONT COVER: Nineteen year old *Copernicia macroglossa* growing in the Beck garden.

**Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society
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**Featured this Month: *Copernicia macroglossa*
by Charlie Beck**



Copernicia macroglossa leaf detail

VISIT US AT www.palmbeachpalmcycadsociety.com

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Copernicia macroglossa is well known in South Florida as the Cuban Petticoat Palm. Many specimens are planted in botanical gardens but it is uncommon in private gardens. This is unfortunate because it has many unique characteristics. The leaves emerge in a whirl on very short petioles. The old leaves remain on the stem and form a distinctive petticoat which remains for many years. Even young palms are very attractive and they become more impressive as they grow. *C. macroglossa* is cold hardy in coastal Palm Beach County. The 2009-2010 record cold winters did not damage any of the five specimens in our garden.

C. macroglossa is a monoecious palm native to western and central Cuba. Natural habitats include savannas, hilly areas and areas beside salt marshes. In habitat, the stems can grow 20' tall and 5-8" in diameter. Stiff semicircular leaves can measure 5-7' wide and are thorny on the margins. Inflorescences extend beyond the leaves.

What kind of growth should you expect with recommended fertilization and irrigation? We originally planted six specimen plants. Four plants grew at a moderate rate. After 19 years overall heights vary between 8' and 11'. Footprints vary between 8' and 10' in diameter. Two of the remaining specimens did not

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Copernicia rigida
by Charlie Beck

Copernicia rigida is a palm native to central and eastern Cuba. It grows on savannas, open pinelands, and serpentine scrub. In habitat its stem can reach 45' in height and can measure 10-14" in diameter. It is similar in appearance to *C. macroglossa* but instead of semicircular leaves it grows narrow leaves which resemble slender cuts of pie. The leaves are so tightly whirled, the crown resembles a shuttlecock. The leaves remain in the upright position



Copernicia rigida leaf detail
(See yardstick on left)

and become a litter trap. The Australian Palm Society states, "Some botanists are raising the possibility that *C. rigida* is carnivorous. Its leaves form a very effective trap for small animals, which die and rot there, providing nutrients for the plant."

This palm is reported to be less cold hardy than *C. macroglossa* but I have not noticed any difference in our garden. You need a lot of patience growing this palm. We have three 12 year old specimens which range from 1' to 7' tall. The footprint of this palm is only 6' in diameter, so it's a good palm for a small garden. This palm is quite rare in cultivation but it is occasionally available at palm sales.

C. rigida does hybridize in nature. There are two named, natural hybrids which occur in Cuba. *Copernicia X sueroana* is *C. rigida* crossed with *C. hospita*. *Copernicia X vespertilionium* is *C. rigida* crossed with *C. gigas*. Both of these hybrids are very attractive and they grow much faster than *C. rigida*. Both hybrids are large palms which rival *C. baileyana* in size. See the photos on page 11 of 12 year old hybrids growing in our garden.

Refer to article on *Copernicia macroglossa* (page 4) for cultural requirements of *Copernicia rigida*. These two species have similar requirements. *C. rigida* is

(Continued on page 7)

(*C. macroglossa* Continued from page 4)
grow as well. I've given up replanting at one location. There must be something in the soil that this palm does not like even though another specimen grew 11' tall just beside it. At another location after three replacements a specimen grows very slowly - 1' tall after 8 years in the ground.

I have noticed after growing many palms and especially *Copernicia* species that genetic variability is a most important factor. Not all palm seedlings are meant to grow into mature specimen plants. Even though plants look healthy when grown in pots some are natural runts and will never perform in the ground. I have a grove of *Veitchia sp.* which produces a carpet of seedlings on the ground. Only the seedlings with the most vigorous growth survive; the rest are stunted or shaded out. In a nursery setting, all seedlings are pampered and many inferior plants can reach salable size. Recently I sought out a *Pseudophoenix vinifera* at our palm sale. One vendor had 3 plants small, medium and large. All three plants were grown from the same seed batch. Of course the prices reflected the plant size but the largest most expensive plant was the best choice because of its relative vigor. Often palm vendors know which of their plants are most vigorous and they will share this information if asked. Dale Holton has helped me choose superior

plants from his nursery. With large *Copernicia sp.* Dale told me to choose the plant with the widest petiole base and sure enough these palms display very rapid growth. So don't be afraid to give up on palms which don't perform. They may never grow into the specimen plants that you expected.

Several *Copernicia sp.* can show minor nutritional deficiencies. Potassium, magnesium, and boron can be deficient in our sandy soil even though fertilizer is applied at regular intervals. Potassium and magnesium are less a problem with *C. macroglossa* but boron deficiency can occur. Boron deficiency in *C. macroglossa* causes the leaves to display accordion folds. Remember that boron deficiency can be cured by applying to the root zone 4-5 ounces of 20 Mule Team Borax dissolved in 5 gallons of water. Repeat at 3 month intervals if deficiency persists. Do not over apply boron because it can be toxic in larger quantities.

So give *Copernicia macroglossa* a try. Its unique appearance will certainly draw attention of your neighbors. These palms are wind resistant and cold hardy in coastal areas. At Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden many specimens survived category 5 Hurricane Andrew. Grow it in full sun and feed it regularly. It is well adapted to our Palm Beach County climate.

(*C. rigida* Continued from page 5)

slower growing than *C. macroglossa*, but *C. rigida* can grow taller and have a larger caliper stem. *C. rigida* does have a smaller footprint and is reported to be less cold hardy than *C. macroglossa*.



Copernicia rigida litter trap



Twelve year old *Copernicia rigida* in the Beck Garden.

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 for an individual membership and \$35 for a dual membership (two people living at the same address) 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. Please go to www.palmbeachpalmcycadsociety.com to obtain our membership application.

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. If you have questions about membership, you can contact Tom Whisler, our Membership Chairman, at (561) 627-8328 or at whisler.tom@synthes.com

2012 Holiday Party Great Year End Giveaway Plants

Arenga engleri

Cold hardy - clumping (sun - shade)

Bentinckia condapanna

New to cultivation - rare medium solitary (sun- partial shade)

Burretiokentia hapala

Good grower -s mall solitary (shade - sun)

Burretiokentia vieillardii

Ornate crownshaft - small solitary (shade when young)

Calypstrocalyx hollrungii

Red emergent leaf - small clumping (moist shade)

Calypstrocalyx leptostachys

Cold sensitive - best grown in pot small solitary (moist shade)

Carpolyon macrospermum

Long green crownshaft large solitary (sun)

Chamaedorea ernesti-augustii

Small - solitary (shade)

Kentiopsis oliviformis

Unique upright form medium solitary (partial shade - sun)

Kerriodoxa elegans

Black petioles - large solitary (shade)

Licuala elegans

Larger & more cold hardy than *L. grandis* - medium solitary (moist shade)

Licuala grandis

Small solitary (moist shade)

Lytocaryum weddellianum

Graceful - small solitary (shade)

Mauritiella armata

Medium clumping like miniature *Mauritia* (wet shade)

Satakentia liukuensis

Purple to green crownshaft large solitary - wind resistant (partial shade- sun)

HOLTON NURSERY
PALMS and CYCADS
5221 3rd Road
Lake Worth, FL 33467
Phone (561) 965-6792
Email cycadnut@gate.net

"By appointment only"

Village Marina
396 Torpey Road
Fort Pierce, Florida. 34946
Wes Taylor
Office 772-464-4391 Cell 772-519-1297

Caribbean Palms Nursery
Mike Harris
1584 F Road
Loxahatchee, FL 33470
Phone: (561) 792-0333
Email: palmz@gate.net

DON'T MISS IT!

PALM BEACH PALM & CYCAD SOCIETY'S
2012 ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY

AND SPECTACULAR PLANT GIVEAWAY

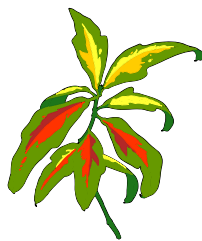
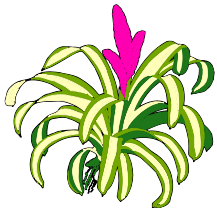
(Sorry - Members Only)

December 5, 2012
At Mounts Botanical Garden

Door opens at 5:00 p.m.
Pot Luck Dinner begins at 6:00 p.m.
Plant Giveaway begins at 7:00 p.m.



Please bring
a covered dish, vegetable or
fruit dish, or dessert
and
a plant (of any kind) for the plant
giveaway.



A list of plants
purchased by the Palm Society
for the giveaway is on page 8.



Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

Affiliate of the International Palm Society

2013 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND RENEWAL
(PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Home Telephone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

\$25—Individual Membership
\$35—Dual Membership (two individuals living at the same address)

Please send the annual Individual Membership Fee OR Dual Membership Fee to:

Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society
P.O. Box 21-2228
Royal Palm Beach, FL 33421
Attn: Membership Chairman

Membership runs from January 1 through December 31. Membership includes one monthly newsletter and receipt of free palms, cycads, and other plants at the annual plant give-away in December.



| FOR PALM SOCIETY USE ONLY | | | | |
|---------------------------|--|-----------|--|------|
| \$ | | Check No. | | Year |

Fabulous *Copernicia rigida* hybrids




LEFT: Twelve year old Copernicia X sueroana with an overall height of 18' growing in the Beck garden.

BELOW: Twelve year old Copernicia X vesper-tilionium with an overall height of 22' growing in the Beck garden.



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



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