



# Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

*Affiliate of the International Palm Society*

Monthly Update

August 2013

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

August 7, 2013

7:30 p.m. General Meeting

Speaker: Carl Lewis, PhD

Director, Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden

Subject: The Cheng Ho Expedition

(David Fairchild's last expedition)

## JULY FEATURED AUCTION PLANTS

*Neoveitchia storckii*  
*Calyptronoma plumeriana*  
*Calyptrogynne ghiesbreghtiana*  
*Dypsis mirabilis*  
(See photos on page 8)

## Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society 2013 Officers & Executive Committee

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### Appointees

Charlie Beck, Librarian

Ruth Lynch, Refreshment Chairman

Brenda Beck, Web Master and Historian

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## JULY THANK YOU

**Food:** Ruth Eberly, Joe Libertucci, Ruth Lynch, Mary Ann Marinaro & Jim Gallagher, Steve Garland, and Rod & Kathy Silverio

**Plant Donations:** Lew Burger, Marshall Dewey, Steve Garland and Dale Holton

**Door:** Janice DiPaola

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## FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Copernicia alba*

by Charlie Beck

*Copernicia alba* is a small sized solitary palm native to Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil and Paraguay. Its southern limit is 30 degrees south of the equator. This makes it the only *Copernicia* species which occurs naturally outside of the tropics. It is reported to be the most cold hardy *Copernicia* and is hardy to zone 9a. This palm grows naturally in grasslands, savannas and seasonally flooded areas beside rivers. *C. alba* has a rounded crown of silver or green palmate fronds. Some specimen plants are reported to grow up to 500 leaves on a single plant. This palm is widely distributed over the countries listed. Estimates of 500 million palms still remain in the wild.

Although *C. alba* is widely distributed in habitat, it is rare in cultivation. We planted 5 specimens in our garden. These plants were distributed at one of our meetings as free give-away seedlings. In 7 years these 5 palms vary in overall height between 6-1/2' to 10'. That is an excellent growth rate for a *Copernicia* species. *C. alba* is similar in appearance to *C. prunifera*. *C. alba* is a much faster grower than *C. prunifera* in our garden. In 19 years *C. prunifera* has only grown to 4-1/2' in overall height. Our *C. alba* have silver fronds which I feel are more attractive than the

grey/green fronds of *C. prunifera*. In habitat *C. alba* can reportedly grow 90' tall but more typical ultimate height in cultivation is about 30'. Remember *Sabal palmetto* is also listed as a palm which grows to 90' tall, but how often do you see a 90' tall *S. palmetto*? A 36 year old specimen of *C. alba* growing at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden (FTBG) has grown only 23' in height. Leaves measure 2-1/2' in diameter and heavily armed petioles grow 2' long. The scale of this palm is perfect for the average Palm Beach County lot. The deeply segmented leaves are very wind resistant so it's not surprising that *C. alba* survived Hurricane Andrew at FTBG. Mature stems can measure up to 10" in diameter. This is a full sun palm that has never shown micro nutritional deficiencies in our garden.

*C. alba* is similar in size to most *Coccothrinax* species but the growth rate is quite a bit faster. You also get the bonus of silver fronds which are highly wind resistant. If you don't have the room for a large *Latania* or a *Bismarkia* and you are fond of silver fronds, give *C. alba* a try. One of our sponsors, Caribbean Palms Nursery, offers this palm for sale.

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### Task Force Testing Biological Control on Rugose Spiraling Whitefly (as reported in the Palm Beach Post)

Palm Beach County Whitefly Task Force, a group of entomology experts, pest control industry members and horticulture groups, are testing the effectiveness of native "parasitoid" wasps on controlling the Rugose Spiraling whitefly. The parasitoids lay eggs inside the whitefly that hatch and feed on the whitefly from the inside, preventing reproduction and or even killing their hosts. Twenty homes in Palm Beach County were selected as test sites.


University of Florida entomologist Lance Osborne said in most cases natural enemies to the whitefly are al-

ready present, but because there is such a huge outbreak and such heavy use of pesticides, it's hard for the wasps to get a foothold. The trick is allowing natural enemies to go to work on the problem. With biological control in place, residents could reduce the amount of pesticides they use in their yard. Biological control can take time. It can take months to years to see a reduction in the whitefly population.



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"By appointment only"



*Copernicia alba* growing in the Beck garden

# Fabulous Finds at Fairchild



## Jules Horwitz Passes Away

by Don Bittel

It is with sadness that I relay the news that long-time Palm Society member Jules Horwitz, 86, of Fort Pierce died on July 20 at Palm Garden of Vero Beach. Jules was an active member of our palm society chapter for a long time. He sold palms regularly at our sales in the 1990's and early 2000's. He usually had his lovely wife Betty helping him.

My first sale was in spring of 1995 at Morikami Park. Jules was vendor #56 and was selling rare tropical palms and growing them north of me in Fort Pierce. He was an inspiration to me to try more tropical palms. He

was one of the few growers that grew *Drymophloeus beguinii*, and also *Verschafeltia* and *Cyrtostachys*.

Jules was born in Philadelphia, served in the Marines during World War II, and lived in Miami operating Jules Pools. He moved to Fort Pierce in 1973 and ran Lakewood Nursery and Garden Center. He also volunteered regularly with Habitat for Humanity. Jules had a great love of palms and shared his enthusiasm easily. He will be remembered and missed just as easily.

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## Pole Pruners

by Charlie Beck

Pole pruners are a must have tool for the palm gardener. They are helpful for pulling vines and cutting off or pulling down dead fronds. Pruning dead palm fronds is usually more difficult than pruning woody trees. Palm fronds are closely spaced so clearance for the saw is limited. Many palm fronds are springy so they move up and down with the saw blade which makes sawing more difficult. *Hyphaene* fronds are an example of fronds which are hard to saw.

Beware that pole saws should not be used anywhere around electrical power lines. Even a non-conductive pole can be dangerous when wet on the outside or if condensation collects on the inside of the pole. I let professional arborists cut anything that is close to electrical power lines. They are trained in safe practices. Consider wearing eye protection when sawing fronds. Quite a bit of debris comes raining down when sawing fronds. Safety goggles are a good choice. Wearing a hard hat will protect you from heavy, armed fronds falling unpredictably.

Pruning poles come either with self contained telescoping sections or they come with fixed length add on sections. Poles come with one of three types of tool attachments which are "saw only," "combination saw/pruner," and "universal quick change coupler" for changing between saw and pruner. Poles are available in wood, aluminum, and fiberglass. The wooden pole that I have used was inadequate in stiffness. This was a box store product of inferior quality. Arborist supply houses do sell quality wooden poles but I have not tried them. Wooden poles are advertised to be lighter than fiberglass and safer for use around electrical lines. Fiberglass poles come either hollow or with a solid foam core. The hollow poles are lighter. The foam core fiberglass poles are stiffer than hollow poles but are heavier. Solid core fiberglass poles are advertised to be less conductive of electricity due to the foam core that does not allow condensation to form on the inside of the pole. Quality aluminum poles are light and stiff but they are highly conductive of electricity.

Fixed length poles typically come in 6' or 8' lengths. The pole sections are joined with a quick coupler which uses a leaf spring and a pin to lock the lengths together. The disadvantage of this system is the adjustment

of length is limited and the need to carry multiple poles around the garden is cumbersome. I have found that the "quick coupler" pin sometimes can pop out and the pole sections can come apart. This usually leaves the saw length of the pole stranded up in the tree and you might need a ladder to reconnect the pole sections. A piece of duct tape around the leaf spring would prevent the pin from popping out.

Telescoping poles are self contained. You can extend the pole to any length within the pole's limits. This is very useful when trimming palm fronds. Poles that are too long or too short make the job of pruning much more difficult. Telescoping poles need some form of locking mechanism to fix the overall length. Most telescoping poles rely on torquing the sections in opposite directions to lock the length. Sometimes this friction joint loosens during the sawing process. This can be very frustrating while you are in the middle of a cut. Some poles have an additional lock nut which stops the joint from loosening. I have not actually used this product but it seems to be a design improvement. Deluxe telescoping poles employ locking pins and toggle clamps. These poles are the ultimate design. They have plenty of length adjustment but when pinned and clamped, the poles act as if it is a fixed length pole. I have never had any problem with the locking sections coming loose.

Pole length is another variable factor. 12' long poles are fine for immature palms but you will soon be required to use a ladder to trim taller palms. 16' long poles become less stiff due to their additional length. Some 20' long aluminum poles are oval in shape which adds stiffness and directional control. These extra long poles are the ultimate in pruning poles but they are expensive. These poles come with the deluxe locking pin/toggle clamp design. Even though these poles only weigh 8 pounds they are very cumbersome to maneuver in the crown of a palm when extended to its full length. This 20' long pole is for sawing only. Pruning attachments are too heavy to use on poles of this length.

Quality poles come with "quick coupler" ends which can be used to connect a saw or a bypass pruning

(Continued on page 6)

## INTERNATIONAL PALM SOCIETY SEEKS DIRECTOR NOMINATIONS FOR 2014-2018

The International Palm Society (IPS) is getting ready for the election of IPS Directors for the period 2014-2018, and is seeking nominations. If there is anyone you know who may wish to contribute to the goals of the International Palm Society and who is willing to dedicate the time necessary to serve as a director, please submit his or her name for nomination.

Candidates must have been a member of the IPS for two years and must be willing to travel to all/most IPS meetings at their own expense. Nomination requirements,

guidelines and the duties and expectations of IPS Directors are in the current *Palms* supplement or can be viewed at <http://www.palms.org/nominations.cfm>.

The deadline for nominations is November 20, 2013. Election ballots will be included in the December 2013 issue of *Palms*.

Please send nominations to Larry Noblick at email: [larryn@montgomerybotanical.org](mailto:larryn@montgomerybotanical.org).

*(Continued from page 5)*

head. Combination units sold at box stores come with a saw on one side and a pruner head on the other side. This might seem like an advantage to have both tools mounted on the same pole but bypass pruners have limited use in trimming palm fronds. They add weight to the end of the pruner which makes it harder to handle, and the pruner interferes with adjacent petioles making them less maneuverable. It's best to use a saw or a pruner individually. Pole saw heads are designed to fit certain saw blades. You can't assemble a Corona saw blade onto a Jameson saw head. I find most saw blades are of high quality except those bargain basement brands available from low quality sources. Saw blades typically come in 13" or 16" lengths. 16" blades are better but they cost nearly twice as much. Most saw blades cannot be resharpened. It is important to use sharp saw blades. I tend to use the saw blade after its useful life has passed. I'm always amazed how much easier a new blade cuts through petioles. Most pole saw heads come with a hook. This feature is very useful to hang the pole in the tree in between cuts. It is also useful pulling down partially cut fronds or vines. This hook also allows you to hang your pruner in the garage.

Bypass pruner heads have either 1¼" or 1¾" cutting capacities. I use the larger of the two sizes which has a

compound pulley. This provides more leverage when cutting larger petioles. Even this large pruner is of limited use in a palm garden. It's fine for cutting *Thrinax* or *Coccothrinax* fronds but it is too small for most palms. I also have a ratchet cut pruning attachment. It has an anvil blade which must be perfectly aligned to complete the cut. This type of pruner has a mechanical advantage due to its ratchet mechanism. You must pull on the rope many times to complete the cut. This is not the tool for cutting through palm fronds. It works better on woody trees. Some fronds are too spongy to let the ratchet mechanism advance to the next pull. These ratchet pruners are also very expensive.

I recommend buying a quality product from an online arborist supply house. These websites provide a lot of guidance in choosing pole pruner tools. I also find that their prices are competitive. Retailers like Amazon also sell these products but Amazon does not lay out all of the options available for this product. I do find that Amazon customer reviews very helpful when determining which pruner to buy. I recommend avoiding pruners from the box stores. Heavy ended combination pruning heads on undersized poles make pruning fronds a real chore. Below I give examples of typical cost of quality pole pruners. (See photo on page 7)

BYPASS PRUNING HEAD	1-1/4 capacity	\$50-60
	1-3/4 capacity	\$70-80
POLE SAW HEAD WITH HOOK		\$15-25
SAW BLADE	13" long	\$15-20
	16" long	\$25-40
	16" long	\$83 (resharpenable)
FIBERGLASS POLE (fixed length)	hollow 6' long	\$30
	hollow 8' long	\$35
	foam core 6' long	\$55
ALUMINUM POLE (oval shape including saw head & blade)	12' long	\$190
	16' long	\$225-285
	21' long	\$275-350

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## Dante Cioci Passes Away

We are sorry to report that longtime Palm Society member Dante Cioci passed away in July. We would like to express our condolences to the Cioci family.

## Recent Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden Trip

by Charlie Beck

On a recent trip to Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden I discovered some interesting palms and cycads. Some of these were new finds for me and others were old favorites. See photos on page 4.

*Zamia lindenii* is a rare cycad from Ecuador. I actually discovered two specimen plants in the garden. It's a large *Zamia* with a symmetrical crown of bright green leaves.

*Elaeis oleifera* was a new find for me at Fairchild. It was located in the lowland area close to a lake. This is the American version of the African Oil Palm. It is native

to Central and South America. It's a rare find in South Florida. Judging from the length of its stem this palm must be very old because this species is slow growing.

They planted a new *Lodoicea maldivica* (double coconut) in the unheated portion of the Rare Plant House. Hopefully it will thrive at that location for many years.

*Ceratozamia kuesteriana* with its bronze emergent leaves was quite attractive. The thin leaflets were quite distinctive. This is a cycad that grows well in Palm Beach County and is usually available at our sponsor, Holton Nursery.

## Pole Pruner Tools



**LEFT TO RIGHT:** Bypass pruner; 12' telescoping pole with "leaf spring/pin" attachment; pole saw head with hanging hook; and 20' long aluminum telescoping pole with locking pins and toggle clamps

*Opinions expressed and products or recommendations published in this newsletter may not be the opinions or recommendations of the Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society or its board of directors.*

**Photos of August featured auction plants as grown in Palm Beach County.**

*(Photos by Charlie Beck)*



*Calyptronoma plumeriana* - Graceful palm native to Hispaniola. It prefers moist growing area.



*Neoveitchia storckii* - Medium sized native to Fiji. It has a black crownshaft and wide overlapping leaflets.



*Dypsis mirabilis* - Is native to Madagascar. It retains its bifid leaves and forms a dark purple crownshaft.



*Calyptrogyne ghiesbreghtiana* - Features bifid leaves on subterranean stems. Emergent fronds are salmon color.