



Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

Affiliate of the International Palm Society

Monthly Update

March 2014

Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

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Appointees

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Ruth Lynch, Refreshment Chairman

Brenda Beck, Web Master and Historian

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UPCOMING GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, March 5, 2014, 7:30 p.m.

at the Mount's Botanical Garden building

Speaker: Paul Craft

Subject: International Palm Society 2012 Biennial Trip to Thailand

MARCH FEATURED AUCTION PLANT



Cyrtostachys renda x elegans hybrid



Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society's Annual Spring Palm & Cycad Sale

Saturday, April 12, 2014

9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Sunday, April 13, 2014

9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

at Mounts Botanical Garden

531 N. Military Trail • West Palm Beach

A limited supply of a top-rated fertilizer,
palm and cycad reference books,
and t-shirts will also be available
for purchase.

DON'T MISS IT!

FEBRUARY THANK YOU

Food: Tom and Carol Ramiccio, Ruth Eberly,
Ruth Lynch, Kathy and Rod Silverio

Plant Donations: Chris Miggliaccio, Dale Holton

Door: Tom Ramiccio

Photographs in this issue were provided by Charlie Beck
unless otherwise noted.

Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society Members: You are encouraged to sign up for our digital newsletter, take advantage of our "full color edition" plus an eco-friendly method of delivery. Please email your request to newsletters@palmbeachpalmcycadsociety.com to opt-in to email newsletters and opt-out of a copy by mail.

VISIT US ONLINE AT: <http://www.palmbeachpalmcycadsociety.com>

FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Areca catechu*
by Charlie Beck

Areca catechu is a small to medium sized, pinnate palm which is widely cultivated throughout the tropics. The common name is the betel-nut palm. It can be readily found growing in the Tropical Pacific, Asia and Eastern Africa. The origin of this species is uncertain but it is assumed to be from Malaysian rainforest areas. Being monoecious, this palm can produce viable seeds from a single plant. Even though this palm's footprint is small it can grow to 100' tall in the tropics. I've never seen this palm taller than 30' in Florida.

You might ask "why is this palm so widely cultivated across the tropics?" The answer is that the seeds of this palm are coveted for their intoxicating properties. Betel-nut seeds are chewed with slaked lime and pepper vine leaves. The mild narcotic effect can be addicting. Chewing the seeds is reported to be part of certain Hindu rituals. The negative effect of frequent betel-nut chewing is that it stains gums and saliva red and stains teeth black. A friend of mine from India told me that black teeth and red gums are a common sight in his native country and many other tropical areas. If you remember the stage play *South Pacific*, there was a character named Bloody Mary. The reason she was named Bloody Mary was because of her red stained gums and saliva due to betel-nut chewing.

Areca catechu has three distinct varieties. The common form of this palm has emerald green leaves and crownshaft. The dwarf variety has similar coloration but has tight clusters of leaves which are about a foot long. *A. catechu* var. *alba* has a yellow crownshaft, a stem with yellow overtones, and orange or yellow petioles.

The common green form is incredibly beautiful when grown in the tropics. Brenda and I have seen this palm cultivated in private gardens in Central and South America, Australia, and New Caledonia. When I saw *Areca catechu* growing in Don Brainerd's private garden in Ecuador, it left an indelible impression on me. The emerald green color and the tropical lushness make this palm a worthy candidate for inclusion in your garden.

Areca catechu var. *alba* is more of a curiosity in my mind than a "must have" palm. The yellow coloration looks like it's suffering from a nutritional deficiency in my opinion. I did attempt to grow this variety years ago with no success. I'm not sure why it died but it died in the pot. Possibly it's more cold sensitive than the green form.

The dwarf form of *A. catechu* maintains all of the emerald green coloration but has comically short leaves. I've tried

planting this dwarf variety in our garden on many occasions with no success. I'm not sure if it's cold sensitive, or it doesn't like our sandy soil, or if nematodes attack its roots. These palms seem to grow just fine in pots so my recommendation is to grow them in pots and protect them from our severe winter cold snaps. Apparently these palms do not necessarily hold their dwarf characteristic from seed produced by this variety. I've seen many vendors label *A. catechu* "dwarf" on palms which are obviously not dwarfs. I would recommend buying large palms which already show mature stems and very short leaves so that you can be certain that the palm is actually a dwarf. These mature specimen plants are expensive.

Areca catechu (standard green form) is not a surefire palm in Palm Beach County. It is somewhat cold sensitive. I doubt any *A. catechu* palms survived the 1989 South Florida freeze. Living plants at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden (FTBG) were planted out after 2002 which indicates that none of their plants survived the 1989 winter. *A. catechu* did survive the record cold winters of 2009 and 2010 at FTBG. We lost a few *A. catechu* specimens in our garden after the 2009 and 2010 winter seasons, but a few plants did survive the frequent extended cold temperatures in those years. It appears that this palm's cold tolerance is quite variable. For this reason, planting clusters of this solitary palm might be the best strategy for success. *A. catechu* is a relative fast grower. It can be grown in full sun or in deep shade. The beautiful cluster of *A. catechu* planted at FTBG (see photo pg. 3 & 4) is planted in deep shade under a high canopy of trees. It's the most attractive group of *A. catechu* that I have seen outside of the tropics.

The oldest *A. catechu* planted in our garden are 12 years old. I added a specimen last year that showed some dwarf tendencies but have since grown out and appears to be the standard form. What is unique about this palm is the rich green color of the leaves and the crownshaft. The leaves tend to be more upright when grown in full sun. Our 12 year old plants vary from 14' to 18' tall measured to the top of the crownshaft. These palms have never required any minor nutritional supplements when fertilized at recommended rates. Periodic inundation hasn't had any negative effect on these palms. Our shade grown leaves measure 4' long.

As you can see in the photo of FTBG's *A. catechu*, it is hard to plant a more beautiful cluster of palms. I plan to add more *A. catechu* to my collection and I encourage you to do the same. These palms are not expensive and are fast growing, so they are easy to replace if we experience a killer frost.

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.

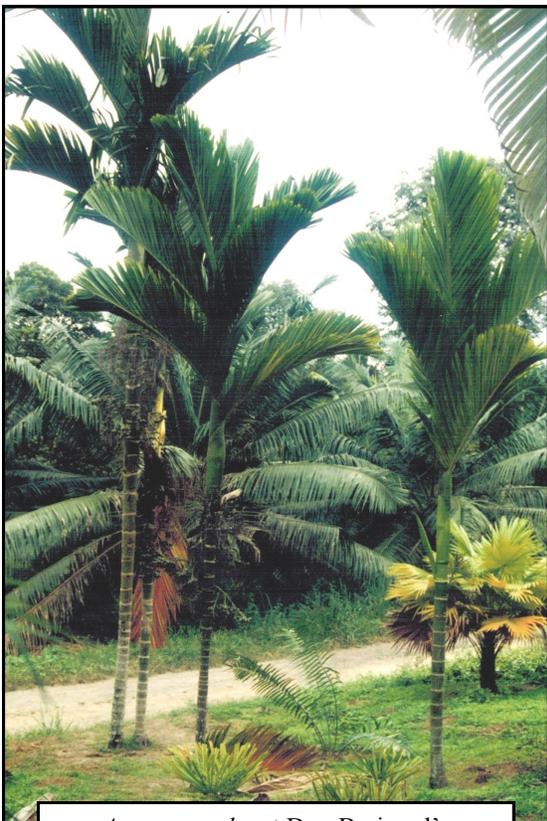
FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Areca catechu*



Areca catechu, 10 years old
at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden



Areca catechu dwarf at Nong Nooch
Tropical Garden, photo by Scott Zona
courtesy of Palmworld.org



Areca catechu at Don Brainerd's
Garden in Ecuador



Areca catechu var. alba crownshaft,
courtesy of the Australian Palm Society

FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Areca catechu*



Areca catechu, 12 years old
in the Beck Garden



Areca catechu, 10 years old
at FTBG

Tom and Mary Whisler Garden



Kentiopsis oliviformis



Wodyetia bifurcata



Burretiokentia hapala



Dictyosperma album
var. furfuraceum



Ravenea rivularis



Beccariophoenix alfredii

Tom and Mary Whisler Garden



Licuala grandis



Dypsis leptocheilos



Satakentia liukuensis



Palm look alike
Carludovica sp.



Pseudophoenix ekmanii



Veitchia montgomeryana



Allagoptera arenaria



Phoenix sylvestris



Bismarckia nobilis

Tom and Mary Whisler Garden



Coccothrinax crinita



*Dictyosperma album
var. rubrum*



*Encephalartos horridus
and E. lehmannii*



Neoveitchia storckii



Hyophorbe lagenicaulis



Zamia variegata



Pinanga caesia



Coccothrinax borhidiana



*Chamaedorea
ernesti-augustii*

Tom and Mary Whisler Garden



Copernicia x shaferi



Carpoxydon macrospermum



Chambeyronia macrocarpa



Chamaerops humilis var. cerifera



Garden detail with assorted bromeliads



Licuala ramsayi



Encephalartos princeps



Raised bed filled with coarse sand

Tom and Mary Whisler Garden
by Charlie Beck

Palm Beach Palm and Cycad Society board members met at Tom and Mary Whisler's residence in North Palm Beach in late January. The Whisler garden is located 2.25 miles from the ocean. This close proximity to the ocean translates to moderated low temperatures on cold nights. The soil in their garden has a higher organic content than the typical Palm Beach County sugar sand. When you match up moderated low temperatures and improved soil quality, with Tom's ability as a garden designer, you end up with a fabulous garden. In addition to the great garden layout, the garden is meticulously maintained to perfection.

Driving down the street approaching the Whisler residence, I wasn't exactly sure where the property was. Then all of a sudden this fabulous collection of palms jump right out at you and then you know that you have arrived. Not only does Tom plant in his yard, he also has planted some choice

palms in his neighbors' yards. What a sight to behold!

Tom has built a special raised bed for alkaline loving plants which require excellent drainage. He dug out the native soil and replaced it with coarse silica sand and mulched it with pea gravel. How's that for dedication? He planted many of the cycads and Caribbean palms which thrive in these conditions. This bed is only a year old but all of the plants are loving these conditions.

Tom has a knack for combining tropical plants. Everything looks so natural in his poolside plantings. His crotons, bromeliads and orchids all look like they are growing in a climate controlled greenhouse. Even the statues and whimsical signs are perfectly placed. I'll share some of the photos I took in their garden- mostly specimen palms and cycads.

PLEASE NOTE: This will be the last issue of our monthly newsletter that you will receive if your 2014 membership dues are not paid. For a membership application and mailing instructions please visit <http://www.palmbeachpalmcycadsociety.com/documents/application.pdf>

To establish an advertising account with us, please send your business card and a check in the amount of \$66 payable to: Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society, P.O. Box 21-2228, Royal Palm Beach, FL 33421. Your business card will be displayed on our website and in our monthly newsletter for the entire year.

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2014 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL NOW DUE

Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

Affiliate of the International Palm Society

Membership Application

	Internal Use Only
#	
\$	
Y	

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- | | | |
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Include me in the Membership Roster: Yes No (Unless checked, you will be included in the roster)

I am interested in learning more about advertising with Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society, Yes No

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