



Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

Affiliate of the International Palm Society

Monthly Update

May 2014

Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

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UPCOMING GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, May 7, 2014, 7:30 p.m.

at the Mount's Botanical Garden building

Speaker: Chip Jones • Subject: Cycads of Mexico

Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society
proudly presents its
Annual Picnic and Most Spectacular Auction of the Year

WHEN: Saturday, May 24, 2014
8:00 am to 1:30 pm

WHERE: 2802 Lake Osborne Dr
Lake Worth

SEE MORE
INFO ON PAGE 6

APRIL THANK YOU

- Food:** Tom Ramiccio, Ingrid Dewey, Janice DiPaola, Steve Garland, Ruth Eberly, Ruth Sallenbach, Pat Morris, Rod and Kathy Silverio, Jim Shields and Robin Crayford
- Plant Donations:** Dale Holton, Mike Harris, Steve Garland, Ted Shelton, Charlie Beck
- Door:** Roland Grondin

Special thanks to 13 year old Ashley La Platte for co-editing this month's newsletter

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 copy by mail.

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

FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Cocos nucifera* 'Fiji Dwarf'
by Charlie Beck

Many years ago, prior to my arrival to Florida in 1984 and prior to the outbreak of Lethal Yellowing (LY) disease, South Florida was widely planted with coconut palms. I've been told that the predominant canopy tree was the coconut. I'm sorry that I missed that time because it must have been beautiful. The predominant coconuts planted back then were of the tall variety. The Jamaican and Panama Tall varieties were common. They are impressive palms. Their canopies are much larger and more robust than the dwarf varieties which are most commonly planted in South Florida these days. The tall varieties had stems with large boles (swollen bases) which improved their resistance to hurricanes. These tall coconuts also were much more salt and wind tolerant than the dwarf varieties. If you drive along the coast in Palm Beach and farther south you can see remnant survivors of these magnificent palms. Most of these tall variety coconuts were killed by LY disease. Either the surviving tall variety coconuts were naturally resistant to the disease or they have been continually injected with oxytetracycline to protect them from LY.

Lethal Yellowing devastated commercial production of coconuts in places like Jamaica. It was reported that six million coconut palms were killed by LY in the Caribbean. A research project was created to find coconut palms which were naturally resistant to this disease. David Romney was appointed in 1962, Director of the Coconut Industry Board in Jamaica. David led the search for resistant varieties. Three varieties were selected at that time which had improved resistance to LY. They were the Malayan Dwarf, the Maypan Hybrid and the Red Spicata Dwarf. Of the three only the Maypan Hybrid had the robust canopy and boled stem of the tall varieties. Red Spicata never caught on and the Malayan Dwarf was most widely planted.

Dave Romney eventually left Jamaica and moved to Homestead, FL to operate his palm nursery. Dave also published a book in 1997 named Growing Coconuts in South Florida. This is "the" book on coconuts. Everything anyone would want to know about growing coconuts is in this excellent publication. While in Jamaica, Dave researched many aspects concerning coconuts including breeding, fertilizers, rat control, herbicides, spacing, mulching and copra quality. Dave sold coconuts and other palms at his nursery and at sales at Fairchild Tropical

Botanic Garden. He even came to our meetings at the Mounts Garden to present his findings on LY resistant coconut varieties.

When I arrived in South Florida, Malayan Dwarf coconuts were the rage. Maypan Hybrids which required hand cross pollination were less common at that time. To insure the varieties were true to form, you had to import certified seeds from Jamaica. This went on for a long while until the first wave of certified Malayan Dwarf Coconuts matured and produced coconuts. Once seeding occurred, importing certified seed from Jamaica ceased. Also, it was discovered that these coconut varieties had a LY resistance considerably less than 50 percent- not the 70-90% resistance expected.

Another variety, Fiji Dwarf, was also being evaluated for resistance to LY. I know they had a grove of them at the Subtropical Horticulture Research Station at Chapman Field located near Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden. At the last presentation Dave Romney gave to our group at the Mounts Garden, he stated that the Fiji Dwarf was the most LY resistant coconut known at that time. Its resistance was 50 percent, better than the other supposedly resistant varieties.

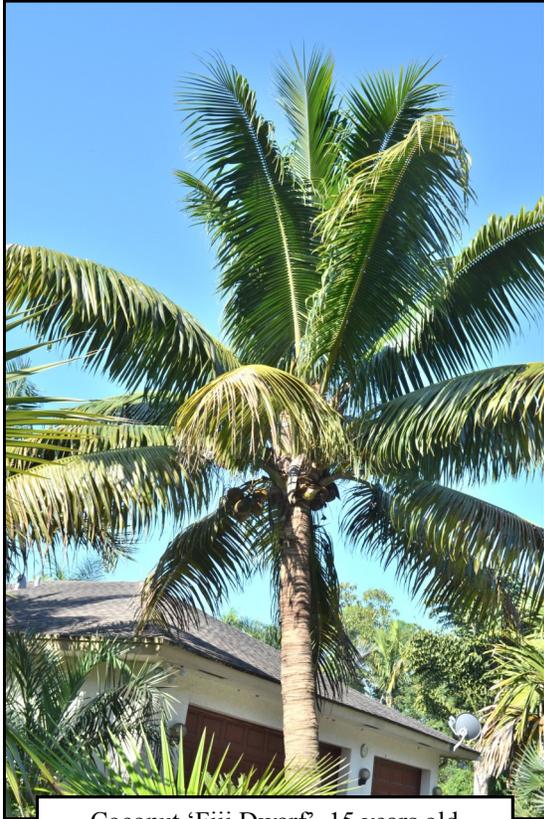
Lucky for me I obtained a Fiji Dwarf coconut palm from Dave Romney which was hand pollinated from the stock of palms at Chapman Field. I planted out our first *Cocos nucifera* 'Fiji Dwarf', in 1999. It's planted in shell rock that we brought in, to create a solid base for home construction. Not only is this palm planted in highly alkaline soil but it is located in a bed surrounded by concrete so that the root zone extends below the driveway. Even though this is not an ideal planting location our palm has grown well. In 15 years, from a small seedling, it has grown 15' of stem. The leaves measure 10' long and the stem has formed the distinctive bole which is characteristic of this variety. It has been producing coconuts for many years. This is the source of the sprouted nuts and potted plants I bring to the meetings for auction or give away. Keep in mind that these plants are not hand pollinated but the closest coconut of a different variety is located at least 200' away. Our healthy bees (no imidacloprid used here) do a great job pollinating the female flowers so the possibility of hybridization is low

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FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Cocos nucifera* 'Fiji Dwarf'



Coconut 'Fiji Dwarf', 15 years old
in the Beck Garden



Coconut 'Fiji Dwarf', 9 years old
in the Beck Garden

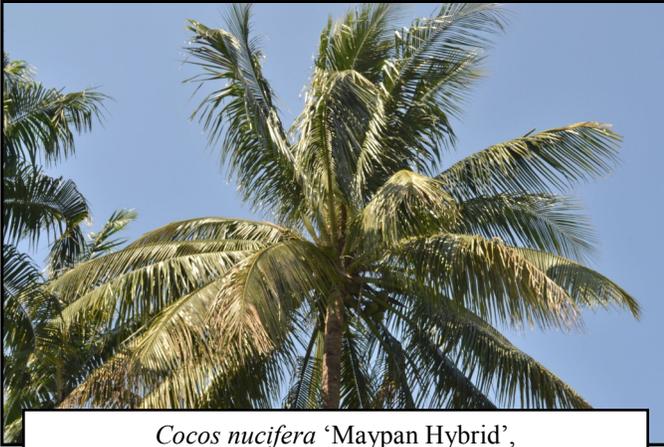


Coconut 'Fiji Dwarf'
at Flamingo Gardens



Coconut 'Fiji Dwarf' bold stem
in the Beck Garden

FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Cocos nucifera* 'Fiji Dwarf'
by Charlie Beck



Cocos nucifera 'Maypan Hybrid',
notice long petioles and widely spaced leaflets



Pritchardia waialealeana, 7 years old, in the Beck
Garden, a specimen will be auctioned at this month's meeting

CRAZY For Your Garden Beds or Just Plain CRAZY?
by Tom Whisler



1a, Oak Leaf Litter and Mulch



1b, Coffee Grinds



1c, Fertilizer



1d, Added Top Soil



1e, Top Soil

CRAZY For Your Garden Beds or Just Plain CRAZY?

by Tom Whisler

It is my pleasure to share some garden tips with you. I am always looking for new ways to enhance my garden and when I heard Craig Morell from Pinecrest Gardens speak, the first time, I started to think... and anyone that knows me, knows this can be dangerous (just ask my wife!)

For years I've been augmenting my gardening beds but decided to step it up this year. I've made friends with the landscape workers at my job so that they save (or don't mind if I gather) bags of oak leaf litter. I think secretly they are thrilled not to have to haul the bags away. Usually I put a two inch layer of leaf litter down, fertilize, and then mulch. Mind you, this is only for beds that are acid loving. And as we all heard from Craig Morell, he always recommends using coffee grinds.

Well, if you're like me, you will take the occasional batch of coffee grinds from the kitchen coffee pot and throw it outside. SO, after listening to Craig Morell speak about coffee, I decided to abandon my kitchen coffee maker and begin an occasional trek to Starbucks. My *Licuala* and *Satakentia* palms love it!

But back to my thinking... at the beginning of this year, I decided I would take getting free coffee grinds more seriously. So I found a Starbucks that is relatively convenient to work. And each morning I would call to request that the baristas save the coffee grinds for me. This worked well but more and more, I found that they would 'forget' to save the grinds. Since my plants were 'loving' the caffeinated attention, I spoke to the baristas to find out how I could make it easier for them to save the grinds for me. One confessed that it was a real pain to save them but after we did some brainstorming, the issue was that they had

troubles finding an empty box the correct size to save the grinds in. I offered to supply them with my very own small plastic storage bin. This has worked out perfectly!

I now receive an average of 45 pounds of coffee grinds,



One day's worth of coffee grinds from Starbucks

PER DAY! And I no longer need to call each morning to remind them. I just show up and they have it saved for me. The problem is, I can't take a day off unless I call in the morning and tell them NOT to save it. How cool is that?! The thing is, the saved coffee is too heavy for the baristas to carry to the dumpster so, in order to keep their respect, I make sure I show up. And can you believe, they now save it over the weekend and I didn't even have to ask for that!! I love Mondays.

Funny story – One of the baristas asked what I did with all the coffee. My response was that I was in charge of a small, local botanical garden and that the coffee was good for the plants. They asked if I get paid or volunteer at the botanical garden, my answer was "Definitely Volunteer!"

So, now comes the crazy part ...since I decided to augment my garden beds with oak leaf litter and mulch (see photo 1a, page 4), coffee grinds (see photo 1b, page 4) fertilizer (see photo 1c, page 4), top soil (see photo 1d, page 4) and mulch, I also decided to build up all the beds to give them a nicer profile. I found a company that would deliver a truck load of composted topsoil which looked more like potting soil (see photo 1e, page 4) and called to order it. I then distributed it to every single solitary garden bed on my property, some areas are up to 14 inches deep adding top soil! All my garden beds now have oak leaves, coffee, dirt, fertilizer and cypress mulch! Is this gonna be crazy good or just plain crazy? My money is on it being crazy good. I'll keep you all posted...

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LAKE OSBORNE ANIMAL CLINIC

JOHN T. LYNCH, D.V.M.

1502 Lake Osborne Dr.
Lake Worth, FL 33461

FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Cocos nucifera* 'Fiji Dwarf'
by Charlie Beck

(Continued from page 2)

although it does occur.

What sets this coconut variety apart from the other commonly grown varieties? Aside from the improved LY resistance and the reinforced, boled stem, the leaf structure is quite different. The leaflets tend to be more closely spaced than other coconut varieties. I feel this leaflet spacing makes it appear more lush. You almost cannot see openings between the leaflets. The petioles also appear shorter so that the leaflets extend closer to the stem. It has been reported that the overall width of the leaves is greater than that of the Malayan Dwarf variety. The first Fiji Dwarf I saw was planted at Flamingo Gardens. It was located close to the Flamingo exhibit. I sure did admire that palm's distinctive beauty (see photo on page 3).

I have planted three offspring of our original specimen palm, two were true Fiji Dwarfs and one must be a hybrid with another variety. These three offspring were planted nine years ago in typical Palm Beach County sugar sand in a low lying area in the garden. These palms are much happier planted in sand as opposed to shell rock. In nine years, stem heights measure 5' and 8'. These palms are planted in an area which floods after repeated heavy rainfall. It doesn't seem to bother them. The hybrid is growing much faster, but it doesn't display the Fiji Dwarf characteristics.

Coconut palms are beautiful palms which grow well in Palm Beach County but they do have some drawbacks. The fronds are self cleaning but they are heavy. They are not as heavy as a *Roystonea regia* but falling leaves can damage underplantings or people standing below. The coconut seeds can also pose a danger when falling from 40' above. Coconut palms are usually cold hardy in our area but they can be set

back by extremely cold winters. My observation is that the Fiji Dwarf is a little more sensitive to cold weather than the Malayan Dwarf. I have discovered that fertilizing every three months does produce coconut palms with higher frond counts. Since I added the fourth winter fertilization my coconuts hold more green fronds below the horizontal position.

Harvested coconuts can be used in many ways. Coconuts can be drilled and drained of refreshing coconut water. You can then split the nuts to harvest the sweet endosperm. Finally you can cut the husk into chunks and use it as orchid growing medium.

Coconut palms symbolize the tropics. What defines the tropics more than a tall coconut waterside? I know people in California are envious of how we can successfully grow coconuts in Palm Beach County. There is a famous stunted coconut palm growing in Newport Beach, CA. Californians seem proud of this single specimen. I'm not sure if it's still alive but the photos that I've seen were pretty sad.

Give the Fiji Dwarf variety a try. They are offered at our meetings as free sprouted seeds or reasonably priced potted auction plants. All proceeds benefit our Palm and Cycad Society when purchased at our auction.

MAY FEATURED AUCTION PLANT



Pritchardia waialealeana,
this is a beautiful specimen,
rarely available. (see photo page 4)



Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society
proudly presents its
Annual Picnic and Most Spectacular Auction of the Year

WHEN: Saturday, May 24, 2014
8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. Garden Tour
10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Auction
12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. Potluck

**WHERE: Terry and Ruth Lynch's fabulous garden located at:
2802 Lake Osborne Dr in Lake Worth**

WHAT TO BRING: Plant donations (of any kind), Potluck dish and a chair