



Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

Affiliate of the International Palm Society

Monthly Update

January 2016

UPCOMING MEETING

January 6, 2016
7:30 p.m.

Speaker: Craig Morell
Subject: Palms of Pinecrest Gardens

at
Mounts Botanical Garden

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Appointees

Brenda Beck, Historian
Brenda LaPlatte, Webmaster

December "THANK YOU"

A big thank you goes out to everyone who joined us at our annual holiday party. Everyone brought one of their favorite dishes. All of the food was fantastic. In addition, the Palm Society donated some very special give away plants and members brought a wide selection of wonderful plants for the give away.

VISIT US AT

www.palmbeachpalmcycadsociety.com

All photographs in this issue were provided by Charlie Beck unless otherwise specified.

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Featured This Month: *Hydriastele dransfieldii*
by Charlie Beck

Hydriastele dransfieldii is native to Biak Island off the northwestern coast of New Guinea. Biak Island is located at 1 degree north of the equator, so this palm is of truly tropical origin. Average annual rainfall is 122 inches. In its native habitat, *H. dransfieldii* is found from sea level to an elevation of 1000'. It grows on areas with very thin soil over limestone rock. This palm is reported to grow on pure limestone, rooted into the cracks.

Hydriastele dransfieldii was originally named *Siphokentia dransfieldii* in 2000. The species name honors the renowned British palm taxonomist John Dransfield, of the Royal Botanic Garden, Kew. *Siphokentia*, *Gulubia*, and *Gronophyllum* were all lumped into the genus *Hydriastele*. Over the years I planted several species of all four of these genera. Generally I found all of them ill-suited for growing in the sandy soil of Palm Beach County. All of my plantings either succumbed, or they struggled and required repeated supplemental applications of minor elements. All of my specimens of *Gulubia* and *Gronophyllum* succumbed to cold winter temperatures.

Hydriastele dransfieldii has been a pleasant surprise in our garden. Our single specimen was planted only one year ago, so it has only experienced our mild 2014-2015 winter season. Even though its hardiness has not been tested by a cold winter, such as 2009-2010, I still highly recommend this palm based on its vigorous growth and its unique attractive appearance.

Hydriastele dransfieldii is a small, monoecious, solitary palm. It grows very stiff leaflets which are wide and unevenly spaced. Our specimen's fronds measure 5' long including the petiole. Leaflets vary in width but the widest leaflet can measure up to

10" wide and 30" long. The terminal leaflets are bifid in form and have a jagged edge. The fronds emerge with an emerald green color and then mature to a very dark green. Emergent leaves have dark peach colored petioles and rachis. As the leaf matures, the petioles darken to a dark brown. This coloration on the rachis and petiole is due to the presence of indumentum (hairs and/or scales). The sheath is also covered by this same colorful indumentum. A stem is forming on our specimen and it measures a diameter of 1-1/2 inches. Ultimate height of *H. dransfieldii* is 6 feet.

In our garden, we've had an issue with our irrigation well. This issue caused our garden to grow without any supplemental irrigation for over 2 months. Some palms in our garden have sharply declined due to this lack of irrigation but *H. dransfieldii* is not one of them. It appears that this palm has a degree of drought tolerance once established.

Our specimen is planted in shell rock which was brought in to form a raised pad for our home. This soil is highly alkaline. If you don't have an alkaline area in your garden you might try incorporating pea gravel into the soil. Another method is to plant this palm close to your house foundation where lime leaches from the concrete. Who knows? Maybe this palm will thrive in our native sandy soil. It's certainly worth a try.

Availability of *H. dransfieldii* is not good. I know Jeff Marcus of Floribunda Palms and Exotics occasionally offers seedlings for sale. It is not presently on his price list, but I'll try to obtain a few of these for future Palm Beach Palm and Cycad Society auctions.

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Hydriastele dransfieldii



Bottom side of frond



Colorful rachis and petiole



Upper side of frond



Licuala ramsayi



Encephalartos sp.



Dioon sp.

Mowry Family Donates Special Plants To Mounts Botanical Garden
by Charlie Beck

Elaine Mowry contacted our Palm Beach Palm and Cycad Society (PBPCS), regarding saving an extensive collection of cycads and palms. The garden was planted by her deceased father, Bill Mowry. Bill was a long term member of PBPCS and also held a position on our society's board of directors for many years. It was decided that the property would be sold, and the new owners would probably not value Bill's fabulous collection of plants. The new owners would likely destroy any plant which didn't fit into their vision of ideal landscape design.

Some of our Society's board members visited the Mowry garden and concluded that Bill Mowry's collection of plants should be saved. In an effort to find homes for Bill's plant collection, calls were made to both public gardens and private collectors. After a time, Mounts Botanical Garden (MBG) expressed an interest in providing a home for some of Bill's plants. Of course MBG did not have the ability to dig and move the plants. Luckily, Chip Jones, owner of Jones Landscaping and frequent lecturer at PBPCS meetings,

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Zamia vazquezii



Dioon sp.



Chip Jones clearing the path for removal of *Kentiopsis oliviformis*



Ceratozamia sp.



Tom Whisler came to work!



Moving a large *Macrozamia moorei*



Tom Ramiccio, Joel Crippen & TomWhisler



First dug plants loaded in trailer



Chip Jones provided the expertise



Elaeis guineensis looked fine without fertilizer or irrigation



Encephalartos horridus (Photo by Joel Crippen)



Lucky cycads prior to move to new home



Encephalartos ferox (Photo by Joel Crippen)

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expressed an interest in relocating the plants to the Mounts Botanical Garden. PBPCS agreed to contribute a portion of the relocation cost, but Chip certainly covered the majority of the expense. Chip worked all day with a large crew of his employees. He provided all of the equipment required to move so many large plants. He also filled the excavation holes with topsoil. Unfortunately, some of the large palms were too heavy to move. Hopefully, whoever purchases the property will realize the value of these plants.

The garden was located on a city lot in Palm Springs. It was a mature garden. I'm sure many of the plants were planted prior to the reestablishment of the PBPCS in 1989. It looked like the garden wasn't fertilized or irrigated for many years. Most of the palms suffered from lack of maintenance, but the cycads looked great. Cycad genera included *Zamia*, *Ceratozamia*, *Macrozamia*, *Dioon* and *Encephalartos*. If you want a low maintenance garden, plant cycads. The Mowery garden certainly proved that cycads are tough plants. Once established, they can thrive without any help from humans. Some palms also thrived in these conditions. *Syagrus sancona*, *Satakentia liukuensis* and *Elaeis guineensis* all looked great but unfortunately were too large to move. Some of the palms that

were dug were *Kentiopsis oliviformis*, *Burretiokentia hapala*, and *Dypsis cabadae*. A magnificent, 7' tall specimen of *Licuala ramsayi* was moved. This is a palm known for growing in wet situations, so we were all amazed at it surviving so many years without supplemental irrigation.

Besides Chip Jones and crew, Tom Whisler, PBPCS board member, provided the muscle required to dig and move the plants. Tom Ramiccio, PBPCS president, and Joel Crippen, MBG horticulturalist, were there to oversee the effort. Joel assured me that MBG intended to install the plants at the garden as soon as possible. Hopefully, the survival rate will be high.