



# Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

*Affiliate of the International Palm Society*

Monthly Update

February 2016

## January “THANK YOU”

Door: Roland Grondin  
Food: Charlie Beck, Don Bittel,  
Janice DiPaola, Ed Napoli,  
Tom Ramiccio

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Don Bittel, Vice President (772) 521-4601  
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(561) 748-1918  
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Charlie Beck, Director, Editor & Librarian  
(561) 963-5511  
Terry Lynch, Director & Events Chair (561) 582-7378  
Richard Murray, Director (561) 791-0388  
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Tom Whisler, Director (561) 627-8328  
Betty Ahlborn, Immediate Past President  
(561) 798-4562

### Appointees

Brenda Beck, Historian  
Brenda LaPlatte, Webmaster

## UPCOMING MEETING

February 3, 2016  
7:30 p.m.  
At Mounts Botanical Garden

**Speaker:** Monica L. Elliott, Ph.D.  
Professor & Acting Center Co-Director  
University of Florida/IFAS  
Florida Research and Education Center

**Subject:** Palm Diseases

**FEATURED AUCTION PLANTS:**  
*Chambeyronia macrocarpa* var. *hookeri*  
*Phytelephas aequatorialis*

## VISIT US AT

[www.palmbeachpalmcycadsociety.com](http://www.palmbeachpalmcycadsociety.com)

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

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: *Caryota no***  
*by Charlie Beck*

*Caryota no* is native to Borneo rainforests. Borneo is located 1° north of the equator, so this is truly a tropical palm. It is considered endangered due to deforestation and harvest of edible palm hearts. This is a solitary palm so there is no regeneration after harvesting the heart. In habitat, this palm can reach a height of 75' and stems measure 18-24" in diameter. *Caryota* is the only palm genus with bipinnate fronds. Attached to the rachis of this palm are opposite secondary rachis which then hold the leaflets. This characteristic makes the fronds appear fernlike. The secondary rachis can measure 7' long, so the overall frond width might approach the total length of the frond. This palm is reported to be one of the largest species of the genus. The common name is the Giant Fishtail Palm.

What sets this palm apart from others in the genus is its upright growth habit. Although this palm is considered a giant, its footprint in the landscape is reduced by its fronds growing mostly upward and rarely ever extending horizontally from the stem. The petioles and rachis are very straight and stiff. The fronds are not self-cleaning so a long pole saw will be needed to remove the dried fronds. If you cut through the petiole you will notice that the petiole is thick and has a rounded cross-section. When the leaf bases release from the stem they are large and heavy.

Another distinguishing feature is that the leaflets are stiff and leathery. They have a well-defined shape with jagged tips. The leaflets are dark green above and either green or silver below. Many other large *Caryota* species display lax weeping leaflets held on less upright petioles.


All species of *Caryota* are monocarpic. Once blooming begins, fronds cease to emerge and all of its stored energy is directed into producing flowers and possibly seeds. Inflorescences begin emerging from the top of the stem and then proceed toward the bot-

tom. Each inflorescence produces single sex flowers. Even though male and female inflorescences are produced on the same palm, individual blooming palms may not produce viable fruit. The timing of pollen release from male flowers must coincide with female flowers being receptive. Two or more fruiting palms will tend to produce more viable fruit. The palm dies after the last inflorescence closest to the ground is spent. The inflorescences are pendulous and can grow 6' long. Seeds are black and contain irritating calcium oxalate crystals. Handling fruit without the protection of gloves is not recommended.

We have two *Caryota no* specimens in our garden. They were planted 10 and 7 years ago. These palms are some of the fastest growing palms in our garden. Palms with large diameter stems usually take a lot of time to commence vertical growth, but these palms exploded out of the ground. The 10 and 7 year old specimens measure 25' and 20' respectively to the lowest leaf base. These palms are planted in moist low areas in the garden and have been well fed throughout their short lives. Fronds measure about 15' long and 12' wide. The stem diameters measure 21" and 17" in diameter at waist level. Unfortunately both palms commenced flowering this year. I believe this premature flowering was caused by lack of any supplemental irrigation over the last several months. We have had problems with our irrigation well and these palms were shocked by lack of water. These palms thrived even though flooded many times in past years. They have been inundated for 2 weeks at a time without any noticeable negative effect. A quality palm fertilizer is usually all that is required for robust growth. I have included photos of blooming palms which display declining fronds which do not look their best. Notice yellow leaf tips and leafless secondary rachis. If your palm shows these characteristics, it's probably ready

*(Continued on page 5)*

(561) 586-2332



**LAKE OSBORNE ANIMAL CLINIC**

JOHN T. LYNCH, D.V.M.

1502 Lake Osborne Dr.  
Lake Worth, FL 33461

**HOLTON NURSERY**  
PALMS and CYCADS

5221 3rd Road  
Lake Worth, FL 33467  
Phone (561) 965-6792  
Email [cycadnut@gate.net](mailto:cycadnut@gate.net)



"By appointment only"

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Blooming 10 year old *Caryota no*



Same *Caryota no* prior to blooming



*Caryota no* inflorescence



*Caryota no*  
courtesy of rarepalmseeds.com





*Same Caryota no* prior to blooming



Blooming 7 year old *Caryota no*



*Chambeyronia macrocarpa* var. *hookeri*  
Auction plant



*Phytelephas aequatorialis*  
Auction plant



(Continued from page 2)

to bloom. I also included photos taken a couple of years ago which show healthy, actively growing fronds.

Some reference books recommend this palm for USDA zones 11 and 10b but I think they would grow quite well in zone 10a. Our garden is in zone 10b and we haven't noticed any cold damage after our record cold 2009-2010 winter seasons. This palm is successfully grown in coastal Southern California. I suspect this palm would grow successfully anywhere a coconut palm thrives.

Be warned. *Caryota no* is not wind resistant. Along with *Arenga pinnata*, it is one of the least wind resistant palms. It was the first palm to topple in 2004 Hurricane Frances. This is a large, heavy palm that should not be planted near your home. Even though we lost our initial planting in 2004, we quickly replaced it in 2005 with a 3 gallon specimen.

*Caryota no* might be a great palm for your garden. Its unique, upright, bipinnate fronds with stiff leaflets will certainly add visual interest to your garden. I believe it's much more attractive than *Caryota obtusa* (formerly known as *C. gigas* or Thai Mountain Giant) and it's certainly a more vigorous grower. Don't let your opinion of fishtail palms be swayed by the common, clumping *Caryota mitis*. That palm requires a lot of thinning and cleaning to look its best. Solitary fishtail palms can be quite attractive.

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**Itch, scratch. Itch, Scratch. ITch. SCRATCH. ITCH SCRATCH SCRATCH SCRATCH SCREAM!!!!**

by Mary Jarett Whisler

Picture this: I offered to help my husband Tom haul branches and seed pods to the curb as he cut and trimmed trees in our yard. Of course I didn't think twice about long sleeves, gloves or jeans since it was a hot summer's day – not to mention that I never wear long sleeves, gloves or jeans to do yard work but that's beside the point.

As I hauled the downed branches and seed pods out to the curb for pick up, I began to itch. First it was my wrists and then it was my legs. HORRIBLE, HORRIBLE itching – so bad that Benedryl and Cortizone cream didn't help. As I shared my situation with Tom, he suggested I hop in the pool and hope the cool water would make a difference. The itching only got worse and when I began to hyperventilate, Tom threatened to rush me to the hospital. Of course, being stubborn, I'd have none of that – mostly because I couldn't identify what was causing the itch and I hate hospitals. It took a half hour to 45 minutes before the itching and



burning began to subside and I was able to emerge from my Linda Blair/Devil personality.

I had no idea how toxic *Caryota* fruit could be to skin until I spoke with Dale Holton. So it looks like I'll be sticking to weeding my garden and not helping with hauling. Sorry Tom, you're on your own!!

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**Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society  
Annual Spring Sale**

Saturday, March 19, 2016 - 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
Sunday, March 20, 2016 - 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

at Mounts Botanical Garden

If you would be available to volunteer your services for even an hour or two to assist at the sale, please contact Tom Ramiccio.



A wide variety of palms and cycads  
A quality palm fertilizer  
Palm reference books  
Palm Society T-shirts  
(including our new long-sleeved T-Shirt)

2016 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL NOW DUE



# Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

*Affiliate of the International Palm Society*

## Membership Application

	Internal Use Only
#	
\$	
Y	

Please select one of the following options:

- New Membership                       Membership Renewal                       Change of Address  
 1 Year - Individual                      \$20.00  
 1 Year - Dual Membership                      \$30.00 for two individuals living at the same address

Please fill in the following fields with your information:

Name(s):		
Phone No.:		
Business (optional):		
Address:		
Apartment or Unit No.:		
City:	State:	Zip:
Email Address:		

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

Please make your check or money order payable in US dollars to: **Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society**

Please print this form and send it along with your payment (please, no cash) to:

**Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society**  
**P.O. Box 212228**  
**Royal Palm Beach, FL 33421-2228**