

GROWING *Colpothrinax wrightii* IN PALM BEACH COUNTY

Submitted by Dale Holton

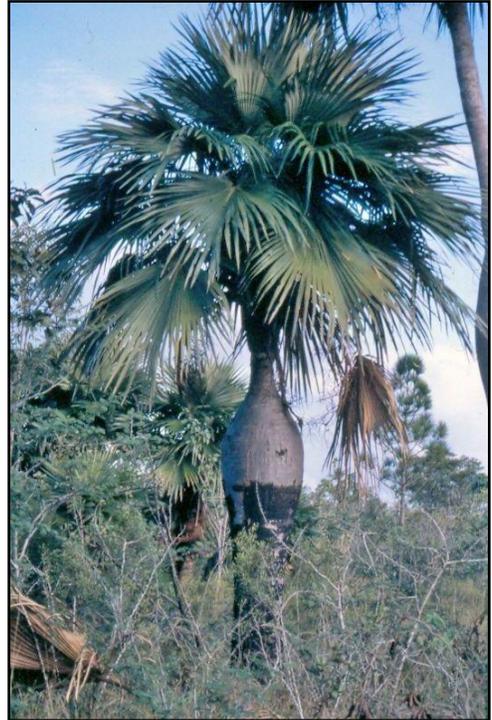
Colpothrinax wrightii is a rare palm in cultivation. It is also a very attractive palm. Its habitat is in western Cuba, growing on seasonally flooded woodlands and fields in mostly clay soils. It is also found on the Isle of Youth in coastal fields that are frequently flooded. My first encounter in that location, I thought that I was looking at a very fibrous *Thrinax radiata*. The Cuban people call it the Cuban Belly Palm. However, *Acrocomia crispa* is also called Cuban Belly Palm.

Unfortunately this palm has been very difficult to grow here in Florida, so it is rarely ever encountered. I only know of a couple of people that are successfully growing them. They are a fan leaf palm and have a thick fiber on the trunk when small. They also grow somewhat slowly. Seeds of this palm are fed to hogs in Cuba.

Seeds have been available from time to time. They germinate readily, but start declining after about a year. Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden planted them out several times with no success until they put one in next to one of the ponds. It is now getting quite large.

I have four in the ground in Loxahatchee that are doing quite well. They are in the ground next to the pond and in very dense white clay or marl. They do not like freezes. Mine usually look quite bad after every winter, but after a couple of months they have recovered and look very good. I have been experimenting on forty plants that I purchased about three years ago. I now am down to seven plants. Two are potted in Turface MVP. Two are potted in my regular potting soil in pots that retain about one and one-half inches of water. Those plants are all doing very good. It is quite obvious that they need lots of water and prefer a clay based soil.

(All photos for this article were provided by Dale Holton.)



Colpothrinax wrightii
growing in habitat in Cuba.



In Turface MVP
and standard pot

In regular potting soil
and water retaining
pots

In regular
potting soil and
standard pot

Dale Holton's seven remaining experimental *C. wrightii*.



ABOVE: *Colpothrinax wrightii* planted in Dale Holton's nursery in Loxahatchee.



LEFT: *C. wrightii* growing in Havana Botanical Garden.

BELOW: *C. wrightii* growing in habitat and an unusual double-stemmed specimen at a residence in Cuba .

