

GROWING *Lanonia dasyantha* IN PALM BEACH COUNTY

Submitted by Charlie Beck

Lanonia dasyantha is a palm introduced into South Florida cultivation in the 1990's under the mistaken name *Licuala radula*. In 2011 a new genus, *Lanonia*, was named by Andrew Henderson and Christine D. Bacon. Eight species of *Licuala* were transferred into *Lanonia*. All of these *Lanonia* species were dioecious unlike the genus *Licuala* which are typically monoecious. Molecular data shows that *Lanonia* is actually most closely related to *Johannesteijsmannia* rather than *Licuala*. *Licuala radula* is still a valid species, it but has probably never been introduced to South Florida.

L. dasyantha is native to Vietnam and southeast China. It grows in lowland rain forest to elevations of 3000'. It has been reported to grow on limestone. This species is listed on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

L. dasyantha is a small, palmate palm which may be either solitary or clustering. Stems can be subterranean or can grow 5' tall. Stems measure up to 2" in diameter. The main attraction of this palm is its mottled dark and light green leaves. There are many palms with striking leaf mottling which rival *L. dasyantha* in beauty, but most of those require cold protection during our occasional cold winters in Palm Beach County. If you are interested in a palm with exceptionally beautiful leaf mottling that does not require cold protection, this is the palm for you. This palm has been reported to be cold hardy to 28°F. Mature leaves measure up to 3' across and are held on 6' long petioles. Leaves are divided into 5-13 leaflets with the center leaflet split into 2 broad lobes.

We have one *L. dasyantha* planted in our garden and it was only planted one year ago. Typically I do not feature a palm with such a short history in our garden, but this palm is such a showstopper that I couldn't wait for a longer track record. I planted our specimen on a mound of soil to minimize root competition from surrounding plants. The mound also reduces the possibility of inundation during times of heavy rainfall. I planted it in a shady situation, but it does receive some direct eastern sunlight. Luckily it was established prior to our well breakdown and it survived without supplemental irrigation for four months. Our palm has not shown any sign of clustering, but it's very small. The leaves measure only 18" across at this time. We have a second potted specimen which I plan to plant in a very prominent position so it can be appreciated every day.

Lucky for us, we have a local source, Holton Nursery, with an ample supply of *L. dasyantha*. Dale Holton introduced this palm to me and has donated several to our society for meeting auctions. Mail order and other South Florida sources also exist for this palm. This is a great palm for Palm Beach County and I hope you give it a try in your garden.

Submitted by Dale Holton

This is a really great palm for a shady area. I purchased my first plants many years ago from Jeff Marcus. I purchased two plants for \$75 each. At that time, they were being called *Licuala radula*. I planted them in my newly made rain forest area. They are still there today but not as happy as they were years ago. I think their location is either too dark or maybe too wet.

As the years went by, the name was changed to *Licuala dasyantha*. It was found that there are male and female plants. My two plants have flowered several times but never seeded. In recent years the name was changed again to *Lanonia dasyantha*.

About three or four years ago, I saw an ad on Palm Talk for seeds of this palm. The seller was in China and he stated that his plants had been down to mid twenties with no damage. The seeds were relatively cheap, so I purchased 100 of them. Most of them grew and the ones that I haven't sold are now getting large. I purchased a second batch the following year and they were equally as good as the first ones.

If you have a shady area, this is a must have palm! I frequently refer to them as the "Poor Man's Mapu."



Lanonia dasyantha one year old in Beck garden
(photo by Charlie Beck)



Lanonia dasyantha potted plant at Holton Nursery



Lanonia dasyantha in Holton garden



Lanonia dasyantha leaf detail in Holton garden



Lanonia dasyantha
potted plants at Holton Nursery