

January
2009



The Palm Report

www.southfloridapalmsociety.com



FEATURED PALM: *Areca macrocalyx*
in the garden of Jeff and Suchin Marcus,
Hawaii

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South Florida Palm Society



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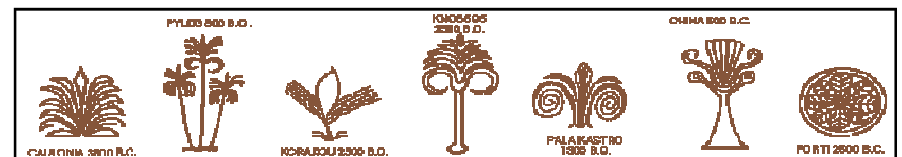
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The Palm Report

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Co Editors:

Tim McKernan
Sandra Farwell
Jody Haynes



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Swainson's hawk perched in
Canary Island date palm, Cutler Bay
(photo by Jody Haynes)

New Member Contest

We are all about palms and want to spread the word near and far. On December 7th, 2009, we will award the person responsible for the most new members with a very generous collection of rare and unusual palms at our Holiday Party. Encourage whoever you think may have an interest in palms to join, and not only will they thank you for it but you may receive a very rare collection of palms.

Watch here to see which palms will be rewarded and be certain your friends mention your name.

SFPS MEMBERSHIP & RENEWAL FORM

New Member Renewing Member Change of Address

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State: _____

Zip code: _____ Country: _____

E-mail: _____ Phone: _____

Referring Person: _____

Membership is \$20.00 annually and is on a calendar year basis. New members' dues received after November 1 will be applied towards the following year unless otherwise requested.

Lifetime Membership levels: Gold - \$500, Silver - \$250 & Bronze - \$100.

Attach check made payable in US dollars to SFPS & mail to:

**Lou Sgueros
7341 SW 5th Street
Plantation, FL 33317**

Why should you become a member of the South Florida Palm Society?

Palms from all over the world are available from member-growers.

A great source for palm seed and information on germination and growing.

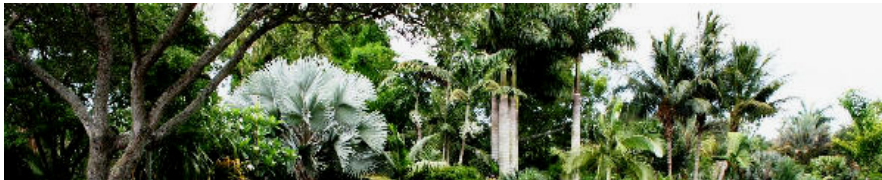
Learn about palms through special programs given by experts.

Member meetings at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden every other month is a great way to share information and meet others with similar interests.

Sales of thousands of rare and unusual palms are available during events throughout the year in different botanical gardens.

The **SFPS** website is here!

www.southfloridapalmsociety.com



- Read the latest news in the most recent issue of the ***Palm Report!***



- View the calendar to plan for upcoming events!



- Get membership information instantly!



- Ask questions directly to our readers on our on-line forum.



- And much, much more.

Featured Palm:



Hawaii, garden of *Bo Goran Lundkvist*. Cover photo and above photo courtesy of *Palmpedia*

Areca macrocalyx is a beautiful solitary palm from the New Guinea highlands. This rare and beautiful gem of a palm has been reported to be a slow but steady grower, needs less heat than the lowland varieties and does well in South Florida. The juvenile keeps an entire, undivided leaf for a long time and eventually obtains a reddish-pink crownshaft. The coloration in the crownshaft will vary among individuals and will be most intense immediately after an old leaf sheath has been removed. ***Areca macrocalyx*** likes a fair amount of water and must have good drainage. Plant this beauty in partial shade to full sun and keep the area around the base supplied with a generous amount of organic mulch.

In order to keep the *Palm Report* as relevant as possible, we ask that our readers submit ideas, articles, and pictures that you feel might be of interest. Suggestions and general questions can be sent to:

Tim McKernan
palmtim@bellsouth.net



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!!!

Douglas Riggan	Consuelo Boronat
Richard Levine	Cheryl Solomon
Jill Menzel	Rush Bowles
Manny Prieques	Juan Illa
Lynda Lynch	LaRocca

Please welcome our newest members and say hello if you happen to see them at one of the meetings.

Keeping your membership up to date will assure you of receiving all *SFPS* email communications, *The Palm Report* and advance copies of the Sale booklets. Membership can be renewed online at www.southfloridapalmsociety.com or by sending your payment with any postal or email address changes to *SFPS*, c/o Lou Sgueros, 7341 SW 5th St., Plantation, FL, 33317. Annual membership is \$20, Lifetime memberships \$100 (Bronze level), \$250 (Silver level), and \$500 (Gold level). Thank you for your support of *The South Florida Palm Society*. We hope to see you at all of our general meetings, field trips, and the Spring and Fall Palm Shows & Sales.

Date Palm Grew From 2,000-Year-Old Seed



A recent study confirms the oldest-sprouted seed in the world is a 2,000-year-old date palm from Jerusalem.

In 1963 several seeds were discovered by Ehud Netzer during archeological excavations at King Harod's palace on Mount Masada near the Dead Sea. Mount Masada is a fortress in present day Israel where King Harod built a spectacular palace. The seeds were identified by the department of Botanical Archeology at Israel's Bar-Ilan University. Their age has been confirmed by carbon dating.

It was at Masada that a hold-out group of Jewish zealot's finally committed mass suicide rather than be captured after the Romans toppled Palestine and laid waste to the temple in 70 A.D. The food stores left behind were well documented in writings that described the suicides as an alternative to living under Roman Rule. Those same writings lead modern-day researchers to the location of those food stores and the date seeds.



Methuselah at 26 months old and almost 4' tall.



In 2005, Dr. Sarah Sallon of the Hadassah Medical Organization in Jerusalem heard about the cache and asked if she would be permitted to attempt germinating these 2,000-year-old seeds. Although the idea seemed crazy, Sarah was given three seeds to try. She then turned them over to botanist Elaine Solowey, and eight weeks later one sprouted. It would be the only one to sprout and was given the name “Methuselah” after the oldest living person in the Bible. Even Dr. Sallon, “was surprised that we were able to grow it.” Methuselah beats out the previous oldest-seed record holder, a lotus tree grown from a 1,300-year-old seed in 1995 by Jane Shen-Miller, a botanist at the University of California, Los Angeles, and colleagues.

The Israeli seedling may eventually offer vital clues to the medicinal properties of the fruit of the Judean date tree which was long thought to be extinct. Today DNA testing tells us that the species is *Phoenix dactylifera*.

It now looks like a healthy modern date palm, but its leaves were plagued with white spots in the beginning which the researchers chalked up to insufficient nutrients. Methuselah prefers to grow in fresh water rather than brackish water as did its descendants. According to Dr. Sallon, this is because the older version of the tree was usually found near freshwater oases, farther from the Dead Sea.

Dr. Sallon also suggests that Methuselah holds potential beyond genetic studies. Judean date palms once formed thick forests throughout the Jordan River Valley. Today, Israel imports its date palms. If Methuselah is female, it might support species-restoration efforts. Sallon said we should know the sex of the plant by 2012 when it is ready to bear fruit. Sallon also wants to know if the plant may have medicinal properties, as the ancients believed. But any real medicinal value will come from its dates. No celebrations are planned if and when a first date appears, Sallon said. “We will celebrate when there is peace,” she said. “We will celebrate when all people in this region can plant these trees together, and share any medicinal benefits it brings.”

Cycad Corner

With Jody Haynes

Welcome to the Cycad Corner!

As an avid cycad enthusiast, conservationist, and researcher, it is my distinct pleasure to have the opportunity to provide the members of the South Florida Palm Society with a regular column devoted to such a wonderful and intriguing companion group to the palms as the Order Cycadales.

As an amateur cycad botanist, I am also the current president of the Cycad Society, Inc., and an invited member of the IUCN World Conservation Union’s Cycad Specialist Group. For the past six years I have been involved in numerous expeditions to study, photograph, and even describe new species of cycads.

My first expedition to study cycads was to Honduras in 2003. During this trip, I contributed to a much greater understanding of the little-known cycad, *Dioon mejiae*. Prior to my first visit to Honduras, this species was thought to be rare, occurring in one or only a very few populations, and growing to only a meter or so in height. My expedi-

tion team and I visited more than 20 populations and estimated the total number of mature plants in habitat at 650,000—effectively elevating it to the most abundant species of cycad in the New World. We also determined that this species grows to more than 10 meters in height and that individual plants may live more than 1,000 years.



Jody dwarfed by a 1,200-year-old giant *Dioon mejiae* in Honduras

During this first expedition, we also visited populations of three species that were as yet undescribed. One of these species was described two years later by a Honduran botanist, while two

more—*Ceratozamia hondurensis* and *Zamia bussellii*—were described by me and my colleagues in the June/September 2008 issue of *Cycad Newsletter*.

In 2004, I was given an opportunity to visit Panama. Over the next four years, my colleagues and I intensively studied the *Zamia skinneri* complex, and our results were published in November 2008 in the *Botanical Journal of the Linnaen Society*. In this paper we recharacterized *Z. skinneri* and *Z. neurophyllidia* and described three new species in the complex—*Z. hamannii*, *Z. imperialis*, and *Z. nesophila*.



Jody displaying a leaf of the newly-described *Ceratozamia hondurensis*



Emergent leaf of *Zamia hamannii*



Jody standing next to the newly-described *Zamia bussellii*



My colleague and co-author, Greg Holzman, standing next to a large *Zamia imperialis*



Emergent leaf of *Zamia nesophila*

Each issue of the *Palm Report* will introduce a different cycad species or cycad-related issue. Topics of interest might include horticultural recommendations, pest or disease problems, the best species for a particular position in the garden, etc. Please send cycad-related questions to jody@cycadconservation.org.

References

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Taylor, A. S., J. L. Haynes, G. Holzman. 2008. Taxonomical, nomenclatural, and biogeographical revelations in the *Zamia skinneri* species complex (Cycadales: Zamiaceae) of Central America. *Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society* 158:399-429.

Palm Q&A

The following questions were posed to Jeff Searle, of Searle Brothers Nursery, and a well-respected palm grower.

- Q. I have planted some expensive *Licuala*, *Dypsis*, and other palms that I have collected in a spot under a large oak tree behind my house. It gets filtered light and has good drainage, but the ground seems sandy. Should I have amended the soil with anything? Is there anything I should do now?
- A. In my opinion, there is not much you can do now since the palms are already planted. Your challenge is to combat the high pH of the sandy soil. To do this, keep the palms well mulched, as over time this will help in bringing down the pH. In addition, keep the palms well fed with a good palm fertilizer and make sure the palms are given plenty of water. Sandy soils hold very little moisture.



- Q. How often should I water my palms during the winter? I have mostly *Coccothrinax* and queen palms in the sun and a talipot in the back.
- A. You basically want to cut back on watering this time of year. Even though we don't typically get a lot of rain through the winter months, the days are shorter and the daytime temperatures are much lower. It will also depend on your existing soils. A yard with good black topsoil (and a mid range of pH) will hold more moisture from one watering to the next. Down in Dade County where there is lots of sand, coral, and limestone, palms will require a little extra water. On average, a yard will do fine during the winter with a sprinkler system that comes on twice a week.
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- Q. My palms are starting to look as if they have some nutritional problems. Should I fertilize now, or should I wait until March? If I fertilize now, what should I use?
- A. It might be best to wait until March when temperatures begin to start rising. Palms grow very little at this time of year, so even though there is fertilizer in the soil, palms won't be taking up much of it. You could try using a foliar feed of minor elements called KeyPlex. This could give some results until a palm fertilizer is put down later.



Upcoming Events:

February 2nd:7:30 a.m.

General Meeting at FTBG in the Corbin Room

Guest speaker: **Dr. Alan Meerow**

“The Origin of the Coconut”

Light refreshments will be served, and a plant auction will follow the speaker.

Free seedlings to all new visitors!

March 14-15: 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Montgomery Botanical Center

“World’s Largest Sale of Palms & Cycads”

This marks our 3rd year at **MBC** and it gets better each year. Come and see more than 25 vendors offering well over 300 varieties of palms and cycads for sale. This event will be stocked with thousands of plants and should have something for everyone.

Don't miss it!

April 4 10 a.m.:

Private Garden Tour & Volunteer Day

We will be visiting several fabulous gardens in the Pinecrest/South Miami area and will tour and have lunch at the Montgomery Botanical Center (MBC). MBC will offer SFPS volunteers the opportunity to plant several small and rare palms, grown in the MBC rare palm nursery, on the MBC grounds.

Details and addresses in the next newsletter.

Thank You for Your Support!

The South Florida Palm Society (SFPS) wishes to thank our many friends for their continued support over the last 30 years. Your generous contributions have helped fund countless research expeditions on palms in habitat, conservation efforts, and horticultural education. These donations have also made us stronger than ever and have gone on to help many local botanical gardens like Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden, Montgomery Botanical Center, and Pinecrest Gardens ... to name a few.

With your help, the SFPS has been able to offer opportunities for the local community to hear world-renowned speakers and experts in palm and plant botany. Our internationally recognized palm and cycad sales have been described as the “world's largest collection of palms and cycads” offered for sale to the public. These events have grown into a collection of “Who’s Who” of growers and draw visitors to the event from all over the world.

With your continued support, we can fund more student research and conservation efforts, as well as offer more information and education to the community. Please take a moment and help the South Florida Palm Society with these noble endeavors. Please send your contributions to:



South Florida Palm Society

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(954) 797-2868

South Florida Palm Society, c/o Lou Sgueros,

7341 SW 5th Street Plantation, FL 33317

or give online at www.southfloridapalmsociety.com

