

The Codiaeum Connection

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Croton Society News:

Our future meeting schedule is as follows:

*Joann Woods in Lakeland, FL on **Saturday, August 15th, 2009***

The meeting will be hosted by Joann Woods at her home in Lakeland, FL

Address: 2605 Smithtown Drive, Lakeland, FL 33801

Time: 11AM—1PM

Cold beverages and a light lunch will be served following the garden tour. After lunch a plant auction/sale will take place, with all proceeds to benefit the Croton Society. Please bring at least one plant for this event.

RSVP to Joann by Saturday, August 8th - 863-398-3120 or email: snoods2003@yahoo.com

*Ricky & Karen Ginsburg in Boca Raton on **Saturday, October 17th, 2009***

The meeting will be hosted by Rickey & Karen Ginsburg at their home in Boca Raton, FL

Address: 11161 Sandysheal Way, Boca Raton, FL 33498

Time: 11AM—1PM

Cold beverages and a light lunch will be served following the garden tour. After lunch a plant auction/sale will take place, with all proceeds to benefit the Croton Society. Please bring at least one plant for this event.

RSVP to Ricky and Karen by Saturday, October 10th - 561-488-4815 or email: Fawnridge@Bellsouth.net

*Phil Stager in St. Pete, FL on **Saturday, December 5th, 2009***

The meeting will be hosted by Phil Stager at his home in St Pete, FL

Address: 4184 51st Avenue South, St. Pete, FL 33711

Time: 11AM—1PM

Cold beverages and a light lunch will be served following the garden tour. After lunch a plant auction/sale will take place, with all proceeds to benefit the Croton Society. Please bring at least one plant for this event.

RSVP to Phil by Saturday, November 28th - 727-864-1588 or email: PStager@tampabay.rr.com



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Croton Society Future Events

The USF Fall Sale: Saturday, October 10th from 10AM—4 PM and Sunday, October 11th from 10AM—3PM. University of South Florida Botanical Gardens, 4202 E. Fowler Ave., Tampa Campus. This will be the 12th Croton Fall Fiesta event for the society. We need volunteers for set up, sales and tear down. Please call Connie Hoerstgen if you would like to volunteer to help at 813-968-9689. There is early admission and no fee to those members wishing to volunteer.

The Southwest Florida Yard and Garden show Saturday October 31st from 9AM—4 PM and Sunday November 1st from 10 AM—3 PM. This premier event is hosted by the University of Florida (UF) Collier County Master Gardeners office and will be held on-site at the UF Extension Office at 14700 Immokalee Road, Naples, Florida. If any Croton Society member would like to represent the society for this event, please contact us. We will also need volunteers for set up, sales and tear down.

Next year, the Florida State Fair will be February 2010. We need your ideas as well as crotons to be used in the display. Anyone who would like to volunteer with the setup, caring for plants throughout the display time and tear down please call Connie @ 813-968-9689.





WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Rena Conley—Ft. Lauderdale, FL
 Ronald Simpson—Wilmington, DE
 Micki Strubhar—Clinton, IL
 Marnie & Gerry Valent—Miami, FL



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*The distance is nothing; it is only the
first step that is difficult.*

Author: Henri Du Diffand



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Caribbean by James A. Michener (Reprint)

(Pages 4-5)



It was easy to determine where Bakámu and his wife lived, for although their round hut built of wooden poles, wattles and mud resembled all others clustered in friendly circles, the plot of land on which it stood was outlined by a remarkable hedge which glowed when sunlight reflected from it.

When planting it, Tiwánee had used only the croton, a tropic plant which produced in its big, broad leaves a variety of colors that was bedazzling. There were reds, yellows, blues, purple, deep brown and four or five other colors, all dusted with iridescent specks of gold. Some plants, for no discernable reason, had leaves of all one color, others displayed the wildest variations, and occasionally, as if to prove its versatility, the same plant would produce one bright color topside of each leaf, a much darker color on the underside.

A hedge of croton was perpetual bewilderment and joy, because the individual plants were a rowdy lot; they grew in wild profusion, obedient to none of the sensible laws that governed ordinary plants. Had Tiwánee used in her hedge any of the glorious red flowers her village produced – those that would later be called poinsettias, anthuriums or hibiscus – she would have had a known quantity; those flowering shrubs grew to a preordained height, behaved themselves, and clung together as if ruled by only one benevolent spirit: ‘You were intended to be thus and so you will remain, to gladden men’s eyes.’

But croton was an outlaw. Again and again Tiwánee would trim her hedge all of a level and then one morning she would find that two of her plants had taken off like seabirds leaving the bay to soar aloft. They would grow like determined little trees, until they were so out of proportion that she had to eliminate them, for they ruined her hedge. Or again, she would have in one section of her planting crotons of one color, perhaps all yellow, a gorgeous plant, when out of nowhere would spring up one that became a dark purple, and again her design was destroyed.

No one could make a bunch of croton behave, not in size, or color, or general appearance. The most irritating behavior of all was when some especially beautiful plant, showing perhaps a combination of four colors, would suddenly stop growing upward and decide to grow with great proliferation sideways, its leaves becoming ever more glorious as its form degenerated.

One evening as Tiwánee sat with her husband in the sunset glow, surveying her lovely but unruly croton hedge, she told Bakámu: ‘This is the plant closet to people. It can be anything, tall or short, this color or that, bright or dark. You can’t make it obey, for it lives by its own rules, but if you let it have its own way, it can be glorious. Look over there!’ And they studied a splendid stretch of hedge in which all the plants were of the same size and color, a scintillating red, all that is except one in the middle which ruined the whole display: it was a garish purple, two times taller than any other and determined to grow higher.

‘That one reminds me of you,’ she said, ‘going your own way.’



HOT DAY; SIZZLING AUCTION HIGHLIGHTS JUNE MEETING

By Perry Edge

The Croton Society's meeting on June 20th in Ft. Lauderdale was hosted by Rick Leitner and Craig. Their beautiful waterfront home and expertly landscaped yard were the envy of the 40+ members who attended. The garden featured not only a number of great Crotons, but was beautifully balanced with palms and many other tropicals as well. Many thanks to Rick and Craig for making possible a very memorable meeting.

The Society was honored by a brief visit from the legendary John Bender, who once owned a croton collection which Dr. Frank Brown called "the best collection of quality crotons anywhere." Mr. Bender admired the Crotons at Rick's and chatted with some of the members. It was a special treat to have this honorary member stop by.

Following a pizza lunch, the auction began. The day was hot (105° heat index), and the Croton auction was even hotter. Many plants rarely seen at an auction drew spirited bidding, culminating in a record \$400 bid by Jerry Behan for an unnamed variety which Rick donated. Mr. Behan indicated that this plant and the others he purchased that day were for the arboretum in Deerfield Beach (aka Tree Zoo). In addition to Crotons, some other plant varieties were auctioned off, as well as a Tiki totem carved from a sable palm by Rick; and of all things, a shower tower from one of the local beaches. Thanks to all of the members who donated plants and items; the Society took in close to \$2000, a record for a Society auction. This went a long way to make up for revenue lost by the cancellation of the spring sale at the USF botanical gardens. The Society is very grateful for the splendid job done by auctioneer Jeff Searle.



Hosts: Rick & Craig



Jerry Behan



The \$400 Croton!

Ft Lauderdale Highlights:





A Blast From The Past



CODIÆUM CROTON PICTUM, VAR. ELONGATUM.

BOOK REVIEWS

FLORIDA'S BEAUTIFUL CROTONS By Dr. B. Frank Brown \$5.95

At last—a book on crotons!

It begins with the discovery of crotons in the Mollucca Islands (Pacific Ocean) by a Dutch naturalist in 1690, and traces their westward introduction into England, Europe, and finally in the United States by a Philadelphia nurseryman in 1871.

Crotons were introduced into Florida by the famous Royal Palm Nursery of Oneco which began operation in 1881.

The first chapter is devoted to tracing the history of crotons, but the rest of the book is concerned with the popular crotons in Florida today—their varietal names, cultivation, natural enemies, and use in landscaping.

Horticultural societies and botanists throughout the tropical world assisted Dr. Brown in the preparation of his book. Their contributions are evident.

HOUSE PLANTS

By the Editors of "Better Homes & Gardens"
\$2.95

For those who lament the lack of a green thumb, this book's 160 pages will dispel the myths and mystery surrounding success with house plants. It shows and tells how to light, water, feed, pot, and multiply them.

Gardening under artificial light is another topic of discussion. In addition to growing tips on your old plant friends—geraniums, begonias, African violets—you'll meet many exciting, new additions to the collection of favorite foliage and flowering plants.

More than 300 illustrations, including 115 color pictures, show hundreds of plant varieties you can choose from, along with handsome effects which can be achieved decoratively in home and office. Glossary, plus cross-index of both the botanical and common plant names, are invaluable.

EXOTICA 2

By Alfred Byrd Graf
\$25.00

"Exotica," in its first edition, was a massive volume, made up of some 4,000 handsome illustrations. It weighed approximately five pounds. This book contains 7,600 illustrations, and weighs almost nine pounds. At the going rate of \$25.00 per copy, this is a fabulous bargain per pound of valuable information.

This is the sort of book which must, for the author, be a singularly thankless task. Both horticulturists and botanists are notorious in their scathing comments regarding technical, typographic, taxonomic and tedious errors, and yet, we now have come to the conclusion that we could not have done as well as has Mr. Graf in his latest opus.

Mr. Graf and his collaborators (this reviewer is one of those credited with reviewing the Orchidaceae, by the way) have here accomplished a tremendous and invaluable task, one which will be of incalculable worth to all plant enthusiasts for a very long time to come—at least until the appearance of the rumored "Exotica 3" (whose weight we will not even attempt to prophesy). ADH

POWER TO PRODUCE 1960 Yearbook. U. S. Dept. of Agriculture \$2.25

This is the latest in the modern series of comprehensive yearbooks published by the U. S. Department of Agriculture since 1936. This edition is designed for everyone interested in the tremendous benefits and problems that farm technology has brought to this country.

It was written by 90 engineers and technicians in USDA and industry, and was edited by Alfred Stefferud, who has been Yearbook Editor since 1945.

Topics in its 60 chapters, 480 pages (including 96 pages of photos), cover the development of tractors, electricity, communications, power on the land, harvesting methods, developments in handling livestock, mechanization of marketing, farm buildings, efficiency of labor, the effects of power, and power in the future.

Booklet Offered

A free "how-to" booklet called "Marvalcraft" has been published by Kimberly-Clark Corporation, Neenah, Wisconsin.

The 28-page, illustrated booklet offers detailed instructions on the art of creating decorator touches with everyday household items. Subjects covered are planters, closet accessories, desk sets, and wall decorations.

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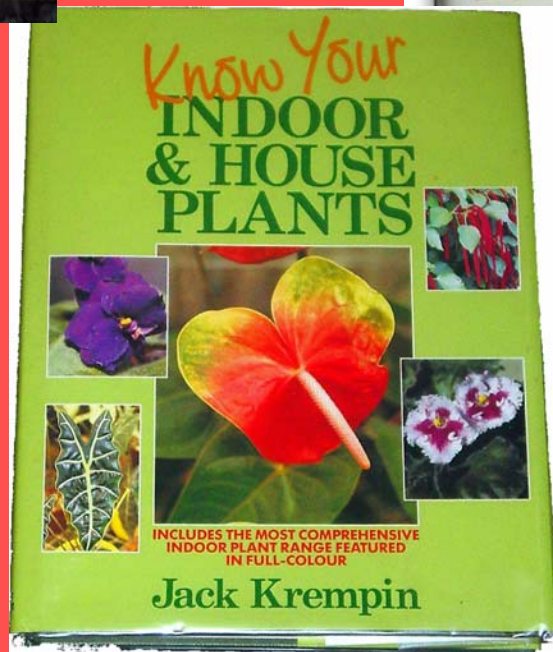
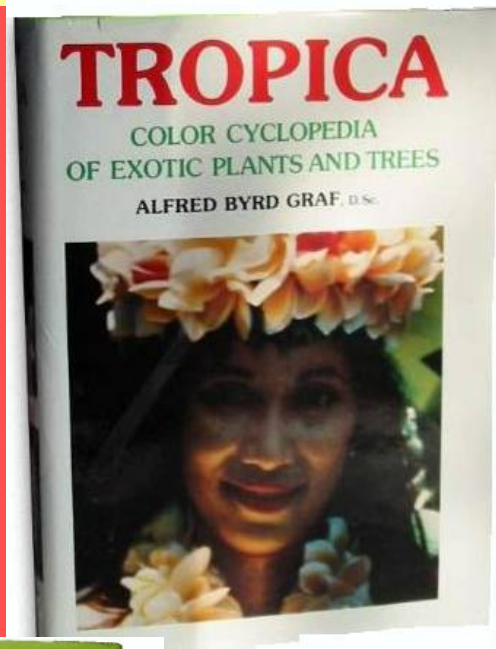
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Serpentarium to 77th Avenue

Croton Reference Materials– Part 2 (Available Books)

Bob Alonso and Harold Lee

Each of the following books are loaded with invaluable references to *Codiaeum Variegatum*. It is our sincere goal that every Croton grower and collector has as much information as possible to identify their precious gems. In our next newsletter, we will publish some of the rare Catalogs that have *Codiaeum* descriptions.



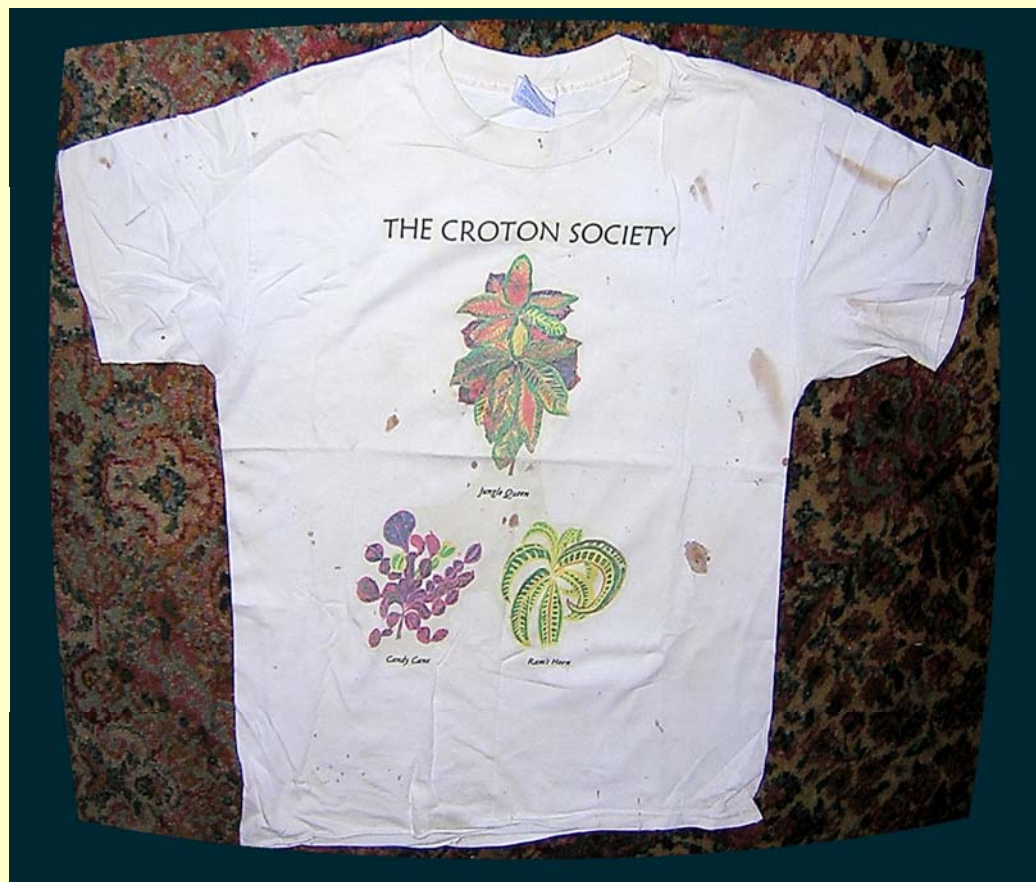
Removing Philodendron and Croton Stains from Clothing

By Marie Nock

If your garden includes crotons and philodendrons as most South Florida gardens do, you likely have stains on your gardening clothes. When you're gardening, the last thing you want to do is worry about getting stains on your clothes - you're more concerned about trimming a branch in the right place, eliminating browning leaves, or doing general clean up. These actions have you brushing against or breaking leaves that will stain your clothing - stains that remain invisible until after your garment is laundered and then appear as brown spots on the dry garment.

Because we grow hundreds of philodendrons and crotons, our garden clothes used to look terrible, full of brown splotches. I could use bleach on white clothes but most of our things were colored so that was not a satisfactory solution. Then one day I began experimenting with Oxi-Clean (the powder). Using it as directed made no difference in the stains so I tried wetting the stain with warm water, putting the Oxi-Clean powder (about 1 tbsp.) on the stain, squeezing it gently to feel the powder heat up in my hand, and then allowing the process to work for about ½ hour. I would then rinse the hardened powder off with warm water. It worked in removing the stains! Sometimes I have to repeat the process and rarely do I have to repeat 2- 3 times.

I have removed stains from all of our gardening clothes and it has now become a routine process. A couple of cautions: 1) Be sure to rinse off the dried Oxi-Clean with warm water rather than pulling it off (I once got a hole in a pair of jeans by pulling it off) and 2) the Oxi-Clean may destabilize color during the treatment.



You dirty rat!



Roof Rat a.k.a. Fruit Rat (*Rattus rattus*)

I've eaten all of your citrus fruit, and your *Crotons* are NEXT!

By Perry Edge

Like it or not, our ornamental plants are *supposed* to be snacked upon by such familiar garden pests as thrips, spider mites, grasshoppers, slugs and the like. After all, that is the way nature works. We plant, and they attack. And, as Croton aficionados, we are prepared to battle back, using every weapon which science and *The*

Farmers Almanac can serve up. Usually, we can prevail. But once in a while, nature inserts a type of vermin so sneaky, so insidious, and so difficult to eradicate that it makes us wonder why we ever chose to get involved with Crotons in the first place. Such was the case with a mysterious nocturnal visitor which began an annual attack on my Crotons, always in the Spring, and sometimes returning in the Fall. It took me three years to finally learn which culprit was to blame for the gratuitous "Croton pruning," in which the tender new growth was systematically chewed off, plant after plant, again and again. I was frustrated and baffled. At this rate, I would have Crotons that looked more like badly neglected *bonsai* than the eight foot specimens I craved.

At first, I suspected the giant *Lubber* grasshopper, which shows up every Spring in central and south Florida, and which can be killed only after rotating one's foot on top of the insect for twenty minutes or so. But that didn't seem to fit, after a discussion with one of the horticulturalists at my local county extension service, who suggested it might be some type of exotic, nocturnal worm, which she carefully avoided naming. But an application of pesticide didn't stop the carnage.

Next, rabbits came under suspicion, until I realized that my container plants high up on a table were also being eaten, and I reasoned that no rabbit can fly or scamper up a table leg, can they? But squirrels can do both. Although they are plentiful in my yard, further research indicated that no self-respecting squirrel would munch on Crotons. Instead, they would rather dig up my plants, in their futile search for The Next Giant Acorn.

A friend suggested it may be the work of a raccoon. After all, they have one of the most eclectic diets of any animal. In other words, they will eat just about anything, including perhaps each other. According to my friend, it could be a mother raccoon, with a ravenous appetite because she was nursing a litter of...(what *do* you call baby raccoons anyway? Cocoons?).

But a call to my local urban wildlife specialist finally cleared up the mystery. She cheerfully informed me that the neat, dainty nibblings of choice new Croton leaves couldn't possibly be the work of a raccoon. "They're very destructive," she said. "You would know if it's raccoons; they're like a wrecking crew. What you have is fruit rats. They're very neat and methodical."

I immediately went into denial mode. "Rats?" I said. "Are you sure it can't be something else? Something easier?" But she was adamant. Then I remembered the hollowed out fruit on nearby citrus trees, on which the rats had feasted and then had the audacity to leave the shells still clinging to the tree, like broken ornaments. No doubt about it, I had fruit rats.

So... what are my options? Can I spray some noxious-tasting chemicals on the plants?" I asked her. But no dice, the nice wildlife lady said. " Nothing like that would deter a fruit rat. They are very hard to control. You can kill them with a traditional "snap trap," or trap them alive. But it's illegal to release them somewhere else. They don't belong here. They're not a native species."

"So what do I do with them?" I asked.

"You have to humanely kill them," she advised.

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. "*Humanely* kill a *rat*?" I stammered. "Are you serious? How would you suggest I do that?"

I never did get a clear answer; it seems that she was leaving that part up to my own imagination.

I decided to seek answers elsewhere. On the Web, I found a University Of Florida/Department of Agriculture fact sheet about fruit rats (which really should be called *roof rats*, I found out) . It was not reassuring to learn that this is the same rat which caused the bubonic plague in Europe. It migrated to America during colonial times, made its way to Florida, and promptly added Crotons to its diet.

The fact sheet was not very encouraging about control of the roof rat. But one method, the use of "biological control agents", appealed to me. In particular, I intrigued by the fact that snakes such as the rat snakes and black racers are supposed to be very effective in controlling rats. But then I thought: I've had black racers in my yard as long as I can remember, so why do I have a rat problem?

Convinced that my black racers were complete slackers, I decided to bring in the heavy guns, i.e., the rat snakes. After all, they were *specialists*. Eventually I acquired both a yellow and a red rat snake (both native species), and released them into the yard. I never saw them again. And there was no decline in the rat damage. So much for biological control agents.

I never was able to come up with an effective way to get rid of the rats, nor could I think of a humane way to kill a rat; especially one that could unleash the bubonic plague. So, eventually I gave up trying to control *Rattus rattus* , and accepted the fact that there would always be a "collateral damage" risk when you choose to put exotic plants directly into nature's path. In time, I was able to move on, and even learned to like the roof rat, with the aid of a wonderful support group (see www.roofrats.org). I even became a volunteer in the "Save the Roof Rat" movement ("If you don't save them, who will?"). But I still can't eat them, even if they do taste like chicken.



Croton Sports

New Croton Introduction– Codiaeum ‘Revolutions’

ALEXANDRIA, Va., June 17 -- Magaly Zaias Fast of Coral Springs, Fla., has developed a new cultivar of *Codiaeum* plant named 'Revolutions' that is characterized by tightly curled variegated leaves.

The closest comparison cultivar is the parent plant *Codiaeum* 'Rams Horn'. This is definitely a sport of Ram's Horn, (*Volutum*). The new cultivar 'Revolutions' is distinguishable from 'Rams Horn' by the following characteristics:

1. 'Revolutions' has leaves with more curls than 'Rams Horn'.
2. 'Revolutions' has leaves with curls that are tighter than 'Rams Horn'



Additional views of Codiaeum 'Revolutions'



