



## Back to the Branch Garden

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The members of the Central Florida Palm and Cycad Society finally got to return to the garden of Rob Branch for a meeting after nearly 6 years. The last meeting here was on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020, immediately before the stay-at-home orders at the outset of the pandemic. After three meetings boasting record or near-record attendance, the fourth meeting did not disappoint. There were double-digit RSVPs the Friday before the meeting, as well as a few unexpected surprises in the attendees.

In addition to the cast of characters in attendance, we piloted our new seed bank format with great success. A long list of seeds sent out the night before the meeting was complimented by the contributions of several other attendees. At one point, the membership chair had to move to a second table to accommodate all of the seeds available for our membership. Bags and labels were provided for anyone who wanted them for their seeds, and the folks who took advantage should have plenty of planting material in the coming year. The biggest surprises include seeds of *Pseudophoenix vinifera* and three different varieties of *Rhopalostylus baueri*.

The official tour got off to a slow start as parking, seed gathering, and vendor setup took a bit longer than expected, but once everything started, the entire meeting seemed to go by in a blink. The tour wrapped up in roughly an hour, giving the attendees some time before lunch to socialize and compare notes on different species and the effects of the November 11<sup>th</sup> Cold Snap. Several members reported frost, and not just those who reside inland away from the coast.

When lunch was served, the attendees raced to the pot of spaghetti with a choice of sauces and ample sweets to power up before the auction started. The auction goers were able to stock up on plants at unbelievably low prices to supplement their bags full of seeds of rare or near-impossible-to-find species. After the auction, we announced the upcoming sales and spring meeting information also available on our website.

The official meeting wrapped up as folks finished buying from vendors and carted their wares back to their vehicles for the trip home. One of our members invited everyone who was traveling north or east to stop in for a pit stop at his property. Our president, Dave Hall, and our membership chair decided to take him up on his offer. What they got to see when they were there was 10 full acres of beauty.

Our member gave us a tour of the entire property, showing us where they have various species planted and integrated with their landscape, while still allowing for wide open spaces that have become increasingly absent from the I-4 corridor. After the meeting, it was time for a little Dukes of Hazzard-style driving on back roads to get back to FL-60, and eventually, home. A perfect ending to a spectacular year for our society. Thank you to everyone who made this year one of the most memorable in CFPACS history!





*Our new seed bank format was a hit.*



*Auction plants pour in next to the seed bank area.*



*Members mill about and grab drinks.*





*Members share a few laughs while waiting for lunch.*



*The area where the tour starts.*



*The koi pond area is lush and green.*





*Generous use of companion plants keeps things interesting.*



*Everyone was offered a tote bag from the Bromeliad Society.*

### **Additional Links**

Holiday Meeting 2025 – PalmTalk Thread:

<https://www.palmtalk.org/forum/topic/91407-central-florida-palm-cycad-society-holiday-2025-meeting/>

Save the Date – February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2026 – Plantae-palooza in Lakeland:

<https://www.palmtalk.org/forum/topic/92139-plantae-palooza-garden-festival-2026/>

Other Events:

<https://cfpacs.com/org/events/>

The IPS Webinar series is available on our Publications page:

<https://cfpacs.com/org/palmateer/>