

The Palmateer

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THE NURSE PALM



Syagrus picrophylla and *S. lorenzianorum* to the right and 2 *Syagrus romanzoffiana* to the left. There are two species of *Coccothrinax hiorami* and *clarensis* that are benefitting from these Queen Palms as well

By John Rossi

Deep in a sun baked valley in the Sonoran Desert a young plant, not yet a foot tall, hides alongside the twisted trunk of a beautiful Palo Verde tree. This plant benefits immensely from the Palo Verde. It protects it from the intensity of the brutal desert sun, from frost when it becomes extremely cold, and from being uprooted by the hungry peccary.

And one day this young plant may tower over the Palo Verde, a 60-foot-tall Saguaro cactus needing protection from no one (except cactus thieves!) Botanists call plants like the Palo Verde, nurse trees.

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Informal Visit To Leu Gardens

By Libby Luedeke

On June 13th seven of us adventurous folks visited Leu Gardens for an informal visit. Most all were donning masks but me, I decided distance was my friend as it was just a little steamy out that day and I would not be able to see anything with my glasses on.

Getting through the lobby was the only area that was tight as far distancing goes, but that is a brief concern. Jerry and I had gone a few weeks before and saw signs that picnicking on the grounds was prohibited at the time, but I no-

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Copernicia alba at Leu.
(Photo by Libby Luedeke)



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**RENEW
YOUR
2020
MEMBERSHIP
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The Palmateer

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ticed a family eating at the picnic tables as we came by the main entry so it appears that those restrictions have been lifted.

Once you are out in the garden you will find that the sidewalks are wide and distancing isn't difficult. We saw several families and individuals strolling around. I would consider it a great place to detox from TV and being stuck in our own gardens and homes. Everyone needs a change of scenery.

If you are looking for a good reciprocal garden, it's one of the best for yearly memberships for the family at \$50 and Seniors 60 and above is only \$35 and this grants you access to over 300 gardens around the country and discounts in the gift shop. Also, discounts on classes and special events.

Plus, if you know someone look-



ing for a special place for a phenomenal wedding it doesn't get much more beautiful. When we were there they were setting up for two different weddings. They have meeting rooms for conferences and other parties as well.

It doesn't matter what time of year you are there, something is always blooming and if you have an affinity for camellias visit in the winter as they are world class. Hope you find time to visit if you haven't already. For more info check out their website <https://www.leugardens.org/>

By Libby Luedeke

On our visit to Leu I decided that the *Aiphanes minima* would be my feature palm. Upon first sight, all you can think about is don't trip and fall into that because it will not turn out well. For me it was all the more reason to celebrate it.

It likes regular watering and a shady spot to start out in. Germinates easily when fresh and prefers a tropical environment but can also thrive in southern California.

Aiphanes, known as the Macaw Palms, are found in the rain forests of the West Indies islands with the exception of Cuba.

Aiphanes minima, palm (left) and leaves (right).

Not only is the trunk spiny, but also the leaves. I can imagine that the dinosaurs might have left this one alone even though it has bright red edible seeds. Maybe the birds got to enjoy them. It can be anywhere from 25ft to 50ft tall and forms a well-rounded crown.

Although it looks deadly it is chosen as an ornamental palm but buyer beware, it hybridizes easily.

The Nurse Palm

(Continued from page 1)

Here in Northern and Central Florida we also receive intense sunshine, occasional brutal cold, and intense periods of rain. Palm lovers often plant sensitive palms under an oak canopy to help protect them. And while this may slow the growth of some palms, it may allow them to reach a size where they can both reach the sun and be large enough to survive a short burst of severe cold.

In a sense, they are using the oaks as nurse trees.

But you can also plant a nurse tree next to a more sensitive species. Recently, we added a *Syagrus lorenzoniorum* and a *Syagrus picrophylla* to our "Palmnagerie". Above them towers a very high oak canopy. To the west is a "High Plateau Coconut," *Beccariophoenix alfredii*, and a large Florida sabal palm, *Sabal palmetto*. To the east it is



Another view of the nurse Queens, left and right with the *S. picrophylla* and *S. lorenzoniorum* center. The goal is to allow enough sunlight in for normal growth but still provide frost and wind protection.

fairly open. To the north, there was a row of Sabal palms with a large Pygmy Date Palm, *Phoenix roebellenii*, in between. But we wanted more protection for these rare *Syagrus* when we receive that really bad winter, such as 2010. It needed to grow fast and look tropical. We chose one of their closest relatives, the Queen Palm, *Syagrus romanzoffiana*. To the eastern side of each .

above-mentioned species, we planted a Queen. Not only will they grow quickly and cover the slower growing species, thereby protecting them from the frost, but their canopy will protect the canopy of those more sensitive species once they reach greater heights.

Hence, they are acting as nurse palms. The Queen Palm is perhaps the best one we can use in

our area. It is very resistant to prolonged periods of intense cold, (90 percent of ours survived the winter of 2010, during which we dropped down to 19 degrees F every night for 2 weeks). It grows very quickly and has a decent size canopy. Mexican fan palms, *Washingtonia robusta*, may also act as nurse palms but the canopy is smaller, and often grows very rapidly up and away from the

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The Nurse Palm

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plants you are trying to protect. Sabals make excellent nurse trees but they often grow too slowly, so one must use a trunked specimen. The ubiquitous palmetto, *Serenoa repens*, makes a wonderful nurse hedge, and excellent wind block, but is also a slow grower. Lady Palms, *Rhapis excels*, work in a similar manner but grow a bit more rapidly. Pindo Palms, *Butia odorata*, make excellent nurse trees, but are also slow growers. Mule Palms are fantastic nurse trees and, of course, they are a little faster growing than the Pindos. **There are** many other species that can be used as nurse palms, especially members of the genus *Livistona*. The Chinese Fan Palm, *Livistona chinensis*, is a rapidly growing palm with broad leaves that provide a great deal of protection to trees near or under

them. Another broad-leaved, tough as nails tree, is the Bismarck Palm, *Bismarckia nobilis*, with its huge canopy. The Silver Date Palm, *Phoenix sylvestris*, and Canary Island Date Palm, *Phoenix canariensis*, may also be used but again they are slow growers.

Therefore, of all the palms in our area, the Queen Palm is probably your best nurse palm! And don't forget about layering, or combining palms of different sizes and shapes, where the coldest hardy palm protects the next most cold hardy palm, etc. An example would be a Queen protecting a cold hardy coconut, which in turn protects an Old Man palm, *Coccothrinax crinita*. The only potential problem is that such a strategy may eventually block too much light for certain species to survive. Other species which relish shade will thrive with such protection! **Interestingly, Queen** Palms, Chi-



nese Fan Palms, and Lady Palms used in combination make an almost impenetrable barrier for Old Man Winter as he tries to take out many of your sensitive palms, even when that dreaded radiational freeze strikes. And don't forget about other tropical plants such as gingers, split leafed philodendrons, and variegated scheffleras. Planting them around the base of your palms may help to protect the trunk and the growing bud, while the nurse palms protect from above!

Another young Queen Palm planted to the north of a Mexican Silver Palm Coccothrinax readii, thereby sandwiching it between the Queen and the large Copernicia alba on the right. This Queen will provide protection from north winds and frost without blocking any of the intense morning sunshine this area receives. A large Phoenix lourerei to the left will also help with wind protection.

Happy planting, from the coldest 9B city in Florida... Hastings!

Ravenea rivularis: Majesty Palm Reconsidered

By Paul Craft

Ravenea rivularis became a popular palm for the indoor foliage market many years ago. Back in the late 1980s and 1990s, I grew up to 100,000 of them yearly that were sold as starter plants to large foliage nurseries. They grew them up to larger sizes and sent them north in the Spring and Summer to be used in homes and offices as potted plants. **It never** took off as an ideal landscape palm in South Florida though. It has a basic demand for wet conditions that cannot be met by the normal Florida landscape. It does best when the water table is consistently high throughout the year. **Many plants** were tried, but successes were few. When a large well-grown specimen is

found in Florida, it truly stands out as a majestic Majesty Palm. **I have** been working on designing and supervising the installation of a 20 acre botanical garden in Delray Beach, Florida and on part of the property purchased for the Garden are 8 large Majesty Palm specimens that flower yearly. **It is** a genus that needs both male and female plants to produce seed, so seeing a *Ravenea rivularis* full of ripe, orange fruit is a rare occurrence here. It is a beautiful sight to behold. **This Garden** just happens to offer the rare combination of optimal growing conditions and enough mature specimens of both sexes to guarantee the plant's success in seed production.



Left, the smallest of the 8 Ravenea rivularis at Paradise Palms Botanical Garden.

Below right, the leaf crown showing bright orange inflorescences and fruit.

Below left, fruit picked up off the ground.



A Gallery of Cycads at Leu. . .

Photos by Libby Luedeke



Above, Ceratozamia hildae. Right, Ceratozamia mexicana.





Above, Ceratozamia vovidesii.

Top left, Ceratozamia robusta.

Bottom left, Encephalartos longifolius.

Encephalartos manikensis



Encephalartos whitelockii

Starting a Desert Garden in the Highlands

By Jeremy Evanchesky

Most palm enthusiasts also enjoy growing the desert flora that will tolerate our wet and humid summers. The good part about a desert garden is that, once the plants are established, you should almost never need to water them to keep them looking their best. In my case, plenty of sand and stone was available for use to create a small bed near an elevated planting.

To start the garden, large pieces of concrete from a demolition project were used to form a retaining wall around the area. Sand was introduced since my native soil has more of a dark, loamy consistency. Plenty of stone was gathered to mix with the sand and mulch the top, providing the type of drainage and heat these plants desire.

Every team needs a leadoff hitter, and there's no palm more emblematic of the desert oases in the southwestern portion of the USA than *Washingtonia filifera*. After reading about some other growers' struggles and successes with these palms in Florida, my decision was to simply grow hundreds of them and find the ones most tolerant of our weather. Sourcing seeds and plants for this common species wasn't difficult, but my population of choice was about an hour northeast of Las Vegas in the Moapa Valley. With this population so far to the north and east, it's likely for their genes to be sturdy against cold and unpolluted by their cousin, *Washingtonia robusta*.

Getting off of I-15 at exit 91, you can find a single specimen just to

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This is a photo of the parent with the trademark skirt living out in the middle of the desert near the Moapa Valley.

This one-year old seedling is pushing its first palmate frond and starting to develop filaments.





Medemia argun. *If you look closely, you can see another leaflet starting to come out.*



Brahea brandegeei. *You can see the old, dead leaflets and some of the damage to the tip of the second live leaflet, but the new leaf is dark green.*



Nannorrhops ritchiana.

My Nannorrhops patch got a little too moist. Fortunately, this one tolerated the excess moisture and is now firmly rooted.

Desert Garden

(Continued from page 10)

the north of the interstate at the intersection of Lewis Ranch Road and Glendale Blvd. With a full skirt of dead fronds, the parent of my plants continues to grow and seed. Germination was 100%, with all 150 seeds collected sprouting. Through giveaways, CFPACS auctions and attrition due to intolerance of moist growing conditions or transplanting, the herd was trimmed to 30 seedlings. Only a few would fit in the stone garden, so the remainder were planted at regular intervals in an area bordering another bed with my native soil.

Like any other grower, I like to tuck some gems away in my planting beds. For desert palms, the three standouts that my small desert attempts to incorporate are *Medemia argun*, *Brahea brandegeei* and silver *Nannorrhops ritchiana*. *Medemia argun*, the Nubian Desert palm, has been on my list ever since it was redis-

covered and was ordered along with *Nannorrhops ritchiana* from North Texas Cold Hardy Palms. *Brahea brandegeei* was a trade from a friend in the panhandle who asked to tour the garden.

All of the palms have had some issues adjusting to their new home. As expected, a few of the *Washingtonia filifera* didn't make it through the transplanting phase. With our dry spring, a few even started showing drought stress. Probably the biggest surprise was when each of the palms had some issues adapting to full sun. Bricks and potted plants were used to give the palms that were struggling a reprieve from full day sun. The most surprising near casualty was *Brahea brandegeei*, but it has since put out a healthy green leaf and looks like it will survive.

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Desert Garden

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Medemia is a notorious tough transplant and the top of the leaflet started to brown. After introducing some shade to them, the smallest one is pushing another leaflet.

The final product was the result of a lot of heavy lifting, propping, digging and filling with materials that would most often be discarded after a demolition. The area behind the stone bed is raised roughly 2 feet above the ground level outside of this area. At this point, the garden will be a perpetual work in progress as the palms either succeed or fail and get replaced.

Please stay well and stay safe, everyone!



*The Desert Stone Garden. The final product ended up imitating the transition present at the continental divide, with seemingly a pure rocky desert on one side and a montane forest on the other, complete with bamboo, avocados, bananas, Teddy Bear palms (*Dypsis leptocheilos*) and several others waiting in the on-deck circle near the Ice Cream bananas. You can also see a couple of blocks being used as temporary shelter for palms that were struggling to adapt.*

AIRBORNE YARD WASTES!



Left, foreground, 50-ft. *Livistona saribus*. Below it is a *Carpentaria*, almost obscured behind is *Veitchia arecina*.



Archontophoenix tuckeri with hanging dead fruitstalk at left, dead *Taraw* leaf at right. The trunk behind is the litter-making *Taraw*.

By John Kennedy

Always grumping about yard waste. That's me, right? Can't have a few palms, (only 100 or so) without their dropping crap non-stop. And, with the rainy season upon us, even more stuff on the ground. Picking it up means becoming the target for ant bites, teeny ants that aren't visible, but their bites sure itch like fire.

My pride and joy is my 50-foot *Livistona saribus*. This was one of my first palms, planted in spring 1981 after I was taken for the first time to a Fairchild palm sale by my mentor in palms. In full innocence/ignorance, I planted the 1-gallon palm which survived the four freezes every winter in the 1980s and grew steadily. After 15 years in the ground, I was relieved to discover that it dropped its dead leaves, now that it was a bit beyond my reach.

Pleased until the Taraw Palm

was about 20 feet high. Then I noticed that a dead infructescence had hooked itself over the petioles of a smaller *Archontophoenix tuckeri* below. I couldn't quite reach this to pull it out but figured (Wrong!) that the wind would blow it out. Didn't happen. Maybe 8 years later, a dropped Taraw leaf hooked itself on the other side of the same *Archontophoenix*. The bottom of the big petiole was just out of my reach and, when I knocked it with a stick, it didn't come undone. The two pieces, the first lodged about 2000 and the second 2010, have been through hurricanes without being dislodged. I had hoped that maybe the leaves holding these would die and drop, thus bringing them down. Hasn't happened.

And, then, last fall I discovered another dead Taraw leaf hanging from a 25-foot *Archontophoenix purpurea*. Again, I was unable to

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AIRBORNE YARD WASTES*(Continued from page 13)*

dislodge this from a palm about 12 feet away from the Taraw.

Will summer result in more dead leaves hanging from other palms nearby? (Maybe I should ask Rob Branch what to do.)

Thank goodness that this messy situation is not visible to the neighbors who tend to have the beautiful lawns with an occasional shrub that are so beloved by Real Americans. I always suspect that my jungly place is regarded as the eyesore of the neighborhood.

Then there's a palm I grew from seed, perfectly beautiful but even more attractive if it was grown on somebody else's property. I mean, of course, my very own 30-foot *Acrocomia aculeata*. No squirrels run up that trunk with its horizontal ring of 3-inch spines at every leaf scar. The palm drops its

dead 10-foot leaves on the ground, which is when the fun begins. These must be removed (and cut up to put in cans for pickup). The petiole and the rachis are also armed with spines. **Not even** leather gloves will save the hands of the picker-up. The only and awkward way of carrying is by holding the dead leaflets in two places before carrying or dragging away. And then, when brought to the front of the house where the old garbage cans live (from the old times before the garbage truck picked up the wheeled bin). The fronds must be cut down to 6-foot lengths and put in the cans.

Once this is accomplished, the yard worker—you know who that is—retires into the house to deal with the punctures left in his hands by the abundant spines, despite leather gloves. Last go-round meant handling 5 dead leaves. How many more will summer provide for the long-suffering property owner?



The petiole of the dead Taraw leaf hangs down on the right side of the Archontophoenix purpurea trunk.

Just look at those spines! And on the petioles, too. The dinosaurs are gone, what need?

(John moans again.)



Mauritiella armata

By Alex Nesalis

Just read [early April] your editor's column in the latest *Palmateer* about *Mauritiella armata*.

I wanted to say that I've had tremendous success with that palm here in Sarasota. I've planted two. One grows in my previous yard that I've sold and has been in the ground since July of 2012, planted as a 1 gallon back then. It's not as fast as my other one. The overall height is probably 8', but with 15-20 stems, and just a little bit of trunk on the main stem.

I planted the one in my new front yard in May of 2015 as a 1 gallon in full blasting sun. It is now about 11' tall with about 7' of clear trunk on the main stem. Doesn't have as many auxilia-



ry stems though as the other one. Only about 7 or 8. The two palms are less than a mile apart and maybe I'll have a fruiting pair one day.

Both went through their first freeze ever in January of 2018 where we were below 32 for 2 hours and it went down to 30 and was very windy. What helped was that both were well estab-

lished by then. I did wrap the base of my current one with a blanket on that night, but the other one was completely unprotected. It was windy, otherwise not sure if they would've handled frost well. They were never exposed to that. In either case there was less damage on my *Mauritiella* that night than on *Kentiopsis oliviformis* next to it.

What it does hate is long periods of low highs. I have gotten stunted leaves in the past following 4-5 days of highs at 65 or below, even when lows didn't go below 40. Also we had one event of a long drizzling cold rain with temps staying in the 48-55 range for about 24 hours. That did some damage and I pulled a few spears, but all but one stems that were damaged - recovered.



Jason Baker at home in Mims, Brevard County. At left almost hidden by Copernicia macroglossa. At right giving scale to Mauritia flexuosa.

(Photos by Sue Reilly)

From the Editor's Desk

We've all spent more time in our gardens than usual due to the shutdown. Possibly a test. How long can you be occupied with the garden every day when you can't go anywhere or see folks other than those who live in your house? And maybe some relatives. But what do people do who don't have a garden to go into? How much TV is it possible to watch before the mind can take no more?

There's always the computer but ordinarily I can't spend more than an hour or so before I have to go away. I've done quite a bit of reading but was hindered by my county library being closed, along with the used paperback shops. Later on, it became possible to request books from the library which could be picked up by arrangement. An employee would come out of the closed library at the appointed time and place the book(s) on a table outside the front door, then go

back inside. The waiting patron would then get out of the car and get the book(s).

* * * *

In February, the neighbors behind our property had two large laurel oaks that were dying cut down. The trees—only a few feet over the property line--were dropping large dead limbs that created more work but little damage so far. BUT their big screened pool enclosure was fairly close to the trees. On our side, the laurel oaks had created a large area of shade on the south side of our half-acre lot. **Long ago**, maybe 1981 or so, when I was new to palms I had planted two small *Bismarckias* at the back because I was told that these palms got very big. At the time, the trees behind were mere saplings. Later, however,

they shaded out the *Bismarckias* which never had more than about 2 and 3 feet of trunk. I planted some small palms that like shade, including a male and a female *Chamaedorea seifrizii* that became sizable. With the trees removed, these started to look wan. But the *Bismarckias* have almost doubled their height in four months, making up for all those years in the shade.

For instance, two 12-foot *Areca triandra*. Now, there's a story. Someone in Brevard County discovered, maybe 20 years ago, that in a Walmart garden shop were little palms mistakenly labeled "Chamaedorea" and identified these as *Areca triandra*. It was thought that some grower farther south had unloaded these on the Walmart buyers who wouldn't know the differ-

ence. Can't recall who told me about this but I went to look here in Vero Beach and in Fort Pierce. Yes, small *Areca triandra* in both Walmarts. I bought two and told gardening friends to go buy them. I think other folks found the *Areca*s in Walmarts down into Palm Beach County. What an unexpected prize!

* * * *

I had several small palms to plant in the beginning of summer and managed to put a couple in the ground before continuing heavy rains stopped me. I am watching to see how all that sun affects the palms that were in the shade. Maybe my *Maurtiella armata* will be encouraged to look like the one pictured in this issue growing in Sarasota. There's not a lot of room left on my half-acre for anything that gets large and needs room, but understory palms are still a possibility.

2nd Quarter Seed Bank Report 2020

By Libby Luedeke

We had seed sales this quarter of about \$130. Right now we only have some cycad seeds. There haven't been many donations lately, but it is getting harder to find species that are more interesting due to some varieties that used to be exotic are now becoming common as more people have them.

Thanks so much to past and present donators and purchasers for your support. If you have interesting seeds to donate you can email us at theseedbank@yahoo.com or mail seeds to.....

Jerry Luedeke

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Copernicia prunifera, the Carnauba Palm, at Leu.
(Photo by Libby Luedeke)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Due to Covid-19, we cancelled our formal June meeting at Leu Gardens. However, we had a nice small group gather for our Saturday social distance walk at the gardens. It provided us with an opportunity to enjoy the collection and catch up. Libby Luedeke took amazing pictures as always and they will be featured in this edition of *The Palmateer*. As many of our board members were present, we discussed setting up a Zoom meeting to move forward with our plans for the October Meeting.

So, please save the dates of Friday – Sunday, October 2-4. We are on the books at Montgomery Botanical Center for that Saturday. At this time, they are not certain whether we will need to tour in small groups of 10 or if they may accommodate a larger grouping. We will know more in September. We are very excited to offer our group this opportunity as it was well attended the last time we went. We also want to have time to visit some of our favorite vendors, spend a day at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, and we have been invited to tour a private garden. It will be a very full 3 days and we will try to find an outdoor venue for a group social on Friday or Saturday night. Much more information will follow our board meeting which we hope to accomplish later this month.

Hoping for a good rainy summer season for all your gardens. Wear your masks, stay safe and enjoy every opportunity to be out of doors.

Dave Hall

PayPal Tutorial

Here is how to make a payment to CFPACS using PayPal

- 1) Log on to <http://www.paypal.com>
- 2) If you have a PayPal account, log into your account. If you do not have a PayPal account, click on the 'Personal' tab. Once on the 'Personal' page go to 'Send Money' and then 'Send Money Online.'
- 3) Once on the 'Send Money' page, type 'payments@cfpacs.com' in the 'To' field. Type in your email address in the 'From' field and the amount you wish to pay in the 'Amount' field.
- 4) From there you will be taken to a secure page where you can enter your name, address and credit card information.
- 5) When you are ready to finish up the payment process, please indicate whether your payment is for membership or seeds or t-shirts in the message field.

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Those joining before October 1 have access to all four issues of *The Palmateer* for the current year.



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Kerriodoxa elegans at Leu.
 (Photo by Libby Luedeke)