

The Palmateer

Volume 13 Number 4

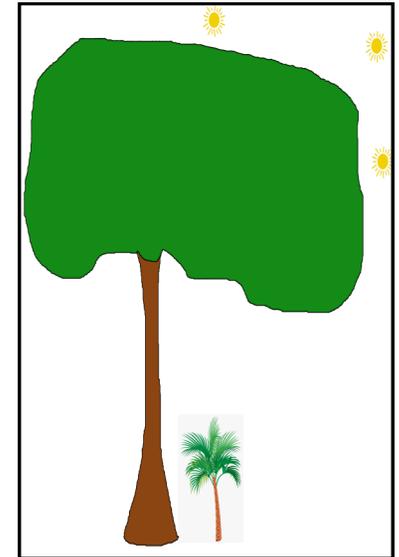
Central Florida Palm & Cycad Society

December 2021

St. Johns Botanical Garden and Nature Preserve



Left, entrance to St. Johns. (Photo by Matthew Kennedy) Right, host John Rossi shows a coconut palm can survive somehow in zone 9B. (Photo by Libby Luedeke)



Let There Be (More) Light

By Jeremy Evanchesky

St John's Botanical Garden

By Libby Luedeke

Our holiday meeting on December 4th was at John Rossi's home which will soon be officially "St Johns Botanical Garden." If you have been reading *The Palmateer* recently you will have seen John's articles about what it takes to become a botanical garden. The hoops jumped

through are astounding with local, state and federal applications and permits. Just widening the driveway has been an act of congress. It's supposed to be officially opened by October 2022 and you can tell by the progress made already that it will most likely make it to that projected

date. The gardens will eventually have a gift shop and offer different options to help maintain the grounds. **There will** be memberships and the ability to adopt a palm and, of course, volunteers are always welcome. John has purchased and placed

name plates and informational plaques throughout with many more to go.

The location is really to the furthest north point of 9B. The temperatures can generally get down to the low 20's. I will quote John, "which is hen when bad things happen

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Many central Florida growers utilize canopy from large trees to stop frost from forming on our sensitive palms and other plants. This practice, along with using wind-breaks like fences and the additional protection of positioning sensitive

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*Fan Palms of the World at St. Johns Botanical Garden.
(Photo by Libby Luedeke)*

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Peace

Renew your CFPACS membership for 2022. See page 15 for details.



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The Palmateer

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St. Johns Botanical Garden

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to good palms.” John has planted many palms and cycads that don’t tolerate these temperatures but has compensated by planting the most sensitive in the oak canopy to help with protection and surrounded them with other planting that are close together to break the wind until they get some size to them. There has also been some electricity added to assist with heat if necessary. The main idea is to provide protection with enough sun to keep them happy. It’s a very delicate balancing act. The location is also very close to the St Johns River which holds in some of the warmth and

allows the property to be about 5 to 7 degrees warmer than surrounding areas. There is a natural high ridge with Saw Palmettos and a lower section filled with *Sabal minors*.

One of the most common questions is, how you are watering all this. Although they are putting in some irrigation, the area is in a great position close to I-95. In the summer the winds prevail mostly from the west and in the afternoon the winds come in off the coast. The air masses collide right over this area pretty much daily. Last year there was rainfall of 100 inches. Otherwise, the big problem is armadillos and rabbits. The former wants to tear up the roots and the latter

want to eat certain varieties such as *Chamaedoreas*.

At the entrance to the gardens are the more tropical selections that should be in zone 10A. Most of these palms and cycads are from Africa, Asia and Australia with several also from Madagascar and New Caledonia. Then there are some from the Hawaiian Islands, most from higher elevations that can tolerate some cold temps. Then you move through Caribbean Cove, Silver Hill and Fan Palms of the World. There is an arid garden which has a Saguaro cactus that has a great story behind it. John was traveling through Jacksonville FL one day and drove by it lying on the ground. He quickly got out the car and pulled it into the brush where it wasn’t easily seen. He then called a friend with

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Above, entrance to St. Johns Botanical Garden. Below, panorama of the garden-in-progress.

(Photos by Matthew Kennedy)



St. Johns Botanical Garden

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a truck large enough to transport it, loaded it up and brought it home. All the while looking over his shoulder waiting for the cops to pull him over for stealing it. Fortunately, that didn't happen. You'll see it pictured. Turns out that it's made of fiberglass!

There are a couple of palms that everyone is keeping an eye on. One is a cross *Jubaea chilensis* x *Butia odorata* x *Jubaea chilensis* called $\frac{3}{4}$ Chilean Wine Palm and the *Alagoptera arenaria* x *Syagrus romanzoffiana*, affectionately referred to as a Sea Queen Palm. We will be anxiously waiting to see how these palms

will fare in the cold temps. **The lower** portion is called the Deep Creek Preserve which will remain in its natural state, with a manmade trail that was laboriously filled with a shell-like medium since the area is prone to flooding and it won't wash away or have rot issues like a plank trail would eventually have. The hardest problem they face is hogs rooting it up. It runs along a beautiful creek that looks like it is spring fed.

Our plant auction was a roaring success. It was the second highest in purchases only next to our sales from Montgomery Botanical donations. There were a tremendous number of donations from both the

First Coast and CFPACS members. The CFPACS got some new members as well. One of the most popular donations came from our new member Christian Chorneyko. He sells air plants, *Tillandsias*. He brought in some real beauties from Central and South America. They were a big hit with several of us, me included. Those alone brought in \$304.00. At the end of the auction John was presented with his host gift, a *Cycas debaoensis* raised by Jerry Luedeke. John seemed to be beyond thrilled with it. A great addition to the beautiful garden. I look forward to seeing the new addition and everything else as the opening date approaches. Maybe put in a little of that vol-



Our host, John Rossi, explains how a coconut palm can survive at the northern tip of zone 9B.
(Photo by Libby Luedeke)

unteer time as well so I can see the changes as they happen. Hope to see you there. Happy New Year to All.

THANKS TO ALL

I want to thank everyone who attended the meeting at the St. Johns Botanical Garden. It was a thrill for myself and the entire board of directors and staff to see our newly built entrance and parking lot fill up after months of hard work and preparation! It was a joy to hear many members compliment us on our new plant signs and interpretive signs! And it was just such a pleasure to see everyone having a good time. I have been a member of many clubs, but I have to say that this one has the nicest, most intelligent, interesting, cooperative people I've ever met. You should be proud of your club. I was honored to host you as President of the SJBG but also as a fellow member of the CFPACS. I do owe an apology to my fellow board members of the SJBG however for failing to introduce them at the meeting. They have all worked very hard in many ways to make our garden begin to come together. They are David Casella, VP (Exec); Don Muttillio, Treasurer; Sofi Moss, Secretary, and Tony Molinaro, VP (Maintenance and Volunteer Coordinator). Brandon Terrel is our fantastic first employee (who we just found out during the auction loves *Tillandsia* bromeliads)! None of this would have been possible without all of their contributions of hard work!! I also wanted to apologize for not chatting as much as usual with many folks. I was up till 4 am the night before putting the finishing touches on some of those signs and I was flat exhausted during much of the meeting!

Thanks again for coming, and you are all welcome back as our guests or as volunteers. Our projected opening date is October of next year but we are always open to members of the CFPACS!

Thanks again, **Dr. John Rossi, President SJBG and proud member and VP (North) of the CFPACS**

Let There Be (More) Light

(Continued from page 1)

palms near heated block homes allows us to enjoy our more tender palms for a long period of time before a record freeze eventually hits the reset button. There's nothing wrong with putting your best foot forward and giving your prize palms the best chance of survival through our unpredictable winters.

There are a few drawbacks to using canopy. One big drawback to canopy is that it tends to slow the growth of the palms underneath if they like having at least some bright sunlight. **The other** is that palms that are less tolerant of prolonged cool air or

soil temperatures tend to languish and look less than their best, if they even manage to survive. Modifying your canopy can help, especially during the cooler dry season from October through March. During this time, every degree of air temperature and soil temperature matter. Plants grown under canopy usually prefer some relief from our scorching summers, especially from direct sunlight from May through September. During these months, leaving a dense, full canopy in place allows the plants growing in the understory layer a refuge from extreme heat and direct light. As we cross into fall and the temperatures begin to dip, it is possible to squeeze out some late season growth

and allow sunlight to reach your plantings on those chilly mornings and raise the temperature of the foliage and the ground. In this way, you still gain the frost protection from the canopy, but allow as much light as possible to reach the plants underneath.

A good first step is to get an idea of where the sun is in the sky during various times of the year. Go out and see where the sun is in relation to your canopy-protected palms. See if there are any limbs you can remove that would allow more light under the canopy without sacrificing the overhead protection component completely or destabilizing the canopy tree. The

more sun that gets under the canopy, the higher the soil and nighttime air temperature will be as a result.

Getting it right may take some experimentation and there is a very good reason to perform this in a phased manner if you decide to try it. A large increase in the amount and intensity of the sunlight reaching a plant can be every bit as fatal as a deep freeze. For this reason, you may want to trim enough to let just a little more light in and see if there are any adverse effects before allowing more light into the protected area.

Since it has been a cool, wet start to the dry season, now might be the time to give your palms a bit more heat under the cover. Good luck and happy growing!



Brandon Terrel, first employee of St Johns Botanical Garden, loves air plants. The auction was a pleasant surprise and opportunity for him.

(Photo by Libby Luedeke)

Seen at the December 4th Meeting



The Saguaro cactus that survived the odds—for good reason. (Photo by Libby Luedeke)

Below, visitors at the area of recent palm plantings. (Photo by Matthew Kennedy)



*John Rossi (left) receives host gift of *Cycas debaoensis* from Jerry Luedeke, right. (Photo by Libby Luedeke)*



The Nature Preserve of the St. Johns Botanical Garden that will be left in its original state. (Photo by Libby Luedeke)

The Cycad Guru

By Libby Luedeke

Saturday, November 13, 2021, Jerry and I headed south to Moore Haven to take some cycads to Chip Jones Landscaping Nursery. As it turned out, we were able to join the Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society who were having a tour that day. So, that made the trip even more fun. We got to meet some new and interesting people. Even Rob Branch made a cameo appearance before the day was over.

As many of you will recall, we had a meeting in Davie a few years ago. We went to Flamingo Gardens where Chip had installed the Cycad Gardens from Around the World and we got to en-

joy his nursery there. Chip is a renowned expert on cycads. He sold his home in Davie a year ago and moved to this quite remote location. Of course, I say remote since it is three hours away from me and there isn't anything more than a convenience store for many miles around, but Chip assured us that he is within an hour and a half of anyplace he needs to go. He acquired 30 acres and what this man has accomplished in a year's time blows my mind. It went from a wooded, vined and rugged landscape to a vast nursery with greenhouse, office and work area and shade house, along with it being his

Great landscape plantings at the Chip Jones nursery in Moore Haven, Glades County, on the southwest shore of Lake Okeechobee
(Photos by the author)



home. Included in this is a 400-amp, electric, reverse osmosis watering system, drainage for the septic system that required a million pounds of rock to build the elevation 52 inches and he also brought in semi loads of coquina rocks plus what he

brought from Davie for planting beds, a pond was created to excavate 360 dump truck loads of soil and the purchase of an excavator, which he taught himself to drive, to put everything in. Quite a year.

Chip took us on a tour

of the grounds which are laid out beautifully. How fortunate to have the years of experience he has now to put into a blank canvas that he can mold to his specifications. As we followed him around the grounds, he lovingly ex-

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Quick transformation for Chip Jones's cycad nursery in its new location.



Chip shows off the croton named after him.

The Cycad Guru

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plained the special care he takes with his cycads and other plants by not beating through the bushes so to speak and carefully moving leaves aside as to not bruise the new leaves. The new growth is very tender and can turn the leaves brown where they were touched. He has laid out his items for sale by grouping species and he has grown almost his entire stock from seed. **Next to** the greenhouse is the bromeliad and cactus/succulent area. In the front of the property as you are coming in is the *Encephalartos* group, then *Ceratozami-* *as* and *Dioons*. He has a parent plant in each sec-

tion to give you an idea of how big they are going to get and what they will look like. He has plans for several more groupings planned in that area. Then you move into landscaped gardens that showcase the different species and give the customers ideas for their own spaces. After that are some palms and more cycads. **Getting closer** to the house you come upon an arid garden full of aloes, agaves, cactus and succulents. This is of particular interest to me since they require little care and I have started my own little arid garden. At the house he has some cycads and bromeliads. There is one section against the house dedi-

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The Cycad Guru

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cated to orchids. On the other side he has a collection of crotons, one especially named after him.

From there we passed the pond that he built, complete with a beautiful dock. Luna, his German Shephard, used this as her personal pool.

Then we arrived at the shadehouse which boasted a larger assortment of bromeliads, trees and some other shade loving cycads and ground cover. It's definitely worth the trip. Hopefully we will



We discover from Chip the care and dedication he provides to produce quality inventory. Right, the Arid Garden at Chip's.

to make the trip.

Jones Landscaping Nursery

9357 State Rd. 80

Moore Haven, FL 33471

(954) 296-2019

Chip-
jones14@hotmail.com

visit again soon. Who knows how much more he will have done by then? He might build his own town before it's over with. I am including contact info if you wish



Pick your own Season's Greetings



Our winter meeting on December 4th in Hastings was fun, just seeing each other after the closedowns was a large part of the enjoyment. We had last visited in October 2018 so we were able to see the progress in creating the St. Johns Botanical Garden and Nature Preserve. Quite a few more plantings and more signs, but still much more to complete before the projected opening in fall of next year. I would suggest to John Rossi—though possibly he’s already thought of this—to contact the tourism office in St. Augustine at that time, for more publicity to visitors and perhaps promote interest in the new botanical garden as a side trip from town.

From the Editor's Desk

* * * *

I’ve received the latest Montgomery Botanical Center *News*. A good conservation story there: *Sabal lougheediana*, identified two years ago as the 15th species in the genus on the Dutch Caribbean island of Bonaire, has been fenced in to protect the 26 remaining individual palms and to allow their seedlings not to be eaten by feral donkeys. Montgomery and the local government arranged this. Montgomery also noted the discovery of two new cycads—*Zamia*—in Colombia.

A few days back, the high temperature in hometown Philadelphia was an astonishing 65° in December. My recollections growing up there in the 1900s usually meant two real blizzards in winter, with a couple of lighter snow storms. But mostly it rained all winter. One memory I have is of girls in evening gowns, wearing galoshes, took these off when they got to the prom and put on their high heels. But any idea of growing palms there collapsed two days after the high with snow flur-

ries. But a few adventurous souls were growing *Sabal minor*, if I recall correctly.

* * * *

Now that the palm scientists are able travel somewhat again, maybe new species will be discovered. Otherwise, the poor folks have little to do beyond changing long-standing genus and species names to bewilder us poor collectors.

* * * *

Again, my thanks to my son Matthew who rescues his dad when the



Ravenea hildebrandtii at St. Johns Botanical Garden.

(Photo by Matthew)

old guy can’t figure out how to correct mistakes after hours on the computer.

John Kennedy

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Renew your CFPACS membership for 2022. See page 15 for details.

I would like first to thank John Rossi, and his crew, at the St Johns Botanical Garden for hosting our December meeting. John has done so much work and improvements since our visit three years ago. Let's all plan to lend support for his grand opening in October, 2022.

Our next meeting is still in the planning stages. We know two things for certain March and Brevard County. We will keep you posted. If anyone in our membership would like to host a meeting, please let me or another board member know.

So far, this winter has been great. Warm and warmer weather just what palm trees like. Wishing you all the happiest of holidays. Looking forward to a fantastic 2022!

Dave Hall

Rick Nale recently sent this photo that he took of visitors to Kopsick in October.



Happy New Year



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The Central Florida Palm & Cycad Society service area includes the following counties:
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- 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.

The International Palm Society (IPS)

1401 Lavaca Street #751
Austin, TX 78701

Regular membership, \$60, other levels of membership (including free), quarterly journal

The Cycad Society

3355 Blanchette Tr.
Lake Worth, FL 33467

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<http://cycad.org>

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