



2024 Fall Meeting Recap

In the fall of 2020, the CFPACS crew embarked on a three-day tour of southeast Florida that included trips to nurseries on Friday, a visit to Montgomery Botanical Center (MBC) on Saturday, and a visit to Mike Harris' garden in Hollywood on Sunday. This model worked well during the pandemic, so we decided to replicate it now that there are less restrictions and a lower risk of serious illness. Our treasurer was able to secure a block of rooms at a hotel for those who wanted to stay for the weekend and ensure that refreshments would be present at our final stop before heading home.

Those that stayed at the hotel were able to enjoy breakfast and dinner together in the hotel lobby. It was a less structured way to converse about recent garden additions and experiences for those used to providing guided tours or planning the details of our meetings.

The first full day of the tour began at a small presentation area at MBC. Dr. Patrick Griffith opened the meeting with a short introduction to the garden and the staff. Dr. Michael Calonje was present to lead most of the tour and provide his expertise on the cycads in the garden.

Most of the group enjoyed the long and thorough tour, which helped them burn off the calories from the large morning breakfast at the hotel. We visited each area of the garden, the Montgomery living quarters, and the nursery. The tour was capped off with a late lunch and a buffet of seeds for the taking. We presented MBC with a donation to continue their work during lunch. The tour attendees made short work of the seeds before departing and resting for the Sunday tour in Hollywood.



Veitchia arecina enhance the view outside the hotel.



Dr. Griffith begins the tour at MBC.



Dr. Calonje describes the cycads planted in the rocky area of the garden.



A 10-year-old *Pseudophoenix ekmanii*.

The following day, we met at the garden of Mike Harris in Hollywood, FL. The garden boasts an array of plants that is unrivaled in most of the continental USA. Greg was on-hand to lead the tour again, just as back in Fall 2020. With approximately 5 acres of paths and jungle-scape to explore, the tour provided plenty of opportunity for attendees to stretch their legs and collect seeds from the wide array of plants. One of the attendees' favorites was the *Orania* seeds that had already sprouted after falling to the ground.

The garden sits in what is now listed as USDA Zone 11a, as much as two full gardening zones higher than the attendees from the furthest north and northwest reaches of our attendees' gardens. Even those attendees in the mildest areas of central Florida were impressed by the *Cyrtostachys renda* growing in the ground beside the pond. Palms, cycads, and tropical plants that typically have to be placed in sheltered spots in our gardens are able to be grown fully in the open and approach their mature size in much less time due to the lack of winter setbacks and increased light levels.

During the tour, Mike asked a few of our members to look at a *Chrysalidocarpus* that had generated some disagreement among experts as to whether it was a *Chrysalidocarpus lutescens* or a different species altogether. One of the features that threw us off was the aerial branching on a few of the trunks. To that point, we hadn't seen that happen in this species. A few weeks later, our membership chair shared a photo of a *Chrysalidocarpus lutescens* growing near the intersection of Edgewood Ave. and Cleveland Heights Blvd. in Lakeland that exhibited this trait.

After the group had navigated the tour of the garden and collected several gallon freezer bags full of seeds to take home, it was time to eat. We set up our lunch around Mike's pool. The group filled their plates, and sat around the pool discussing the various palms, cycads, and tropical plants present on the tour before gradually peeling off to head home and start sowing some of their seeds in preparation for next spring. Some had to make multiple trips to get all of the seeds and leftovers loaded in their vehicles.

Many thanks from our society to our gracious hosts, the members of the CFPACS board, and our incredible membership for making tours like this possible! We hope to see you all again at future meetings!



CFPACS President Dave Hall presents the check to the MBC staff.



An iconic view of the pond in Mike Harris' garden.



A *Chrysalidocarpus lutescens* with aerial branching.



Sometimes it is easy to miss the scale of a garden without people in the photo. Look how the plants dwarf everyone.



Snack Time!

Additional Links:

- Meeting Link (more photos): <https://www.palmtalk.org/forum/topic/85611-central-florida-palm-cycad-society-fall-2024-meeting/>
- Fall 2020 Meeting: <https://www.palmtalk.org/forum/topic/65030-central-florida-palm-cycad-society-fall-meeting-fri-10022020-to-sun-10042020/>
- Future Meetings and Events: <https://cfpacs.com/org/events/>