



THE INTERNATIONAL PALM SOCIETY

Oct. 2020

NEWSLETTER

Extra-Tropical Palms by Andy Hurwitz

After the splendid virtual biennial in the Mascarene Islands, it's time to return to the somewhat less-than-tropical climates that most of us (and our palms) must endure. I figured that after four months of tropical waves gently breaking upon warm sandy beaches, this photo might jolt us back into reality.

The photo below is from Kent, UK, in the winter. Upon first glance, it does not look favorable for a palm garden. However, IPS member Vic Silver planted one very tenacious *Butia odorata* there, and now it is fruiting! Vic communicated this anomaly to Dr. John Dransfield, who was equally astonished. Vic provided the following commentary:



“In 2006 I moved to Ashford in Kent and planted a small *Butia odorata*, which was pot grown in Cornwall (it was actually sold as *B. yatay*). It grew quickly and about 4 years ago it flowered for the first time. Seeds were produced, but the summer season is not generally long enough for the fruit to ripen fully and they drop off during winter. Well in 2018 we had quite a warm spring and summer followed by a mild winter, allowing the fruit to ripen fully in the spring of last year. The seed looked good and looked like they may be viable... and they were. I now have several small home grown *Butia*, something that I understand is unheard of in the U.K. unless under glass.”

Ashford, Kent UK in February, 2012 (photo: Flaviana Di Summa)

Extra-Tropical Palms



Left, *Butia odorata* fruiting in Kent! Vic Silver's son providing scale.

Below, Fruits from the palm.

(all photos by Vic Silver)



The palm as initially planted in 2006.



Extra-Tropical Palms

Butia is a well-studied genus, with over 20 species (some remain controversial). Much of the revelatory research was conducted by IPS board member, Dr. Larry Noblick, at the Montgomery Botanical Center, Miami, Florida. Thanks to his research, we now realize that the name *Butia capitata* was being used erroneously for many years. As Dr. Noblick described: “Probably the most upsetting thing [for growers] that I did was to recognize the true identity of *Butia capitata*, as a small to medium-sized endemic palm...and to identify *Butia odorata* as the correct name for the species most commonly used in cultivation. And the one that dominates the southern part of Brazil and Uruguay.” It turns out that *Butia odorata*, growing in the south, has round fruits and endocarps (as clearly shown in Vic’s photo) distinguishing it from the genuine *Butia capitata*, which has elongated/elliptical fruits and a football shaped endocarps (Noblick, 2011) and is found in central Brazil (and consequently, is less cold tolerant).



Butia odorata, habitat
(Department of Rocha,
Uruguay) photos by Dr.
Larry Noblick.



Extra-Tropical Palms

Many members of the International Palm Society hail from cold climates. Visions of a tropical paradise motivate our desire to grow these enchanting plants either in a greenhouse or maybe even outdoors. Happily there are other cold tolerant palms.

For example *Chamaerops humilis* var. *argentea* (sometimes mistakenly called var. *cerifera*) was re-discovered in habitat at an altitude of 1700 m in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco. "The leaves of this spectacular palm are covered on both surfaces with a thick waxy coating, producing intensely silvery-blue, sometimes nearly white foliage" (Gibbons and Spanner). It is tolerant of $-13^{\circ}\text{C}/9^{\circ}\text{F}$.

Rhapidophyllum hystrix is endemic to the southeastern United States. Its common name is needle-palm (*Hystrix* is the scientific name for a genus of porcupines.) This plant can withstand temperatures as low as $-20^{\circ}\text{C}/-4^{\circ}\text{F}$. *Rhapidophyllum hystrix* is typically slow growing, but this behemoth required a 2000 pound dolly to be dug and transplanted. Records indicate that this specimen was originally planted around 1880 in Montebello California and moved to the mountains of Topanga Canyon by former IPS President Leland Lai. Obviously this centurion palm has survived many freezes. The photograph is by Leland, and for scale, the wall behind is about 6 feet in height.



Chamaerops humilis var. *argentea* in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco. Photo by Toby Spanner.



Leland Lai's very old and very large *Rhapidophyllum hystrix*.

Extra-Tropical Palms

Trachycarpus fortunei survives temperatures as low as $-23^{\circ}\text{C}/-9^{\circ}\text{F}$, claiming victory as the most cold hardy palm. This is a high altitude palm from China.

Trachycarpus fortunei growing beautifully in the Flor og Fjære garden, on an island along the west coast of Norway! (Photo courtesy of Dr. Tor Kjolberg and the Dailey Scandinavian).



Affiliate News

The Central Florida Palm and Cycad Society (CFPACS) [<http://www.cfpacs.com/>] produces a quarterly newsletter, *The Palmateer*. I have corresponded with John D Kennedy, newsletter editor since 1998! The society was formed back in 1975 with real momentum beginning in 1982. This is a historic affiliate with direct ties to IPS founder, Dent Smith.



The most recent newsletter includes a visit to Leu Gardens in Orlando, (with *Aiphanes minima* as a focus plant, see photo), a terrific article with gorgeous photographs of *Ravenea rivularis* (the majesty palm) by Paul Craft, and many gardening tips especially for those in zone 9B.

This month the group will travel south to Miami and visit the Montgomery Botanical Center, Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, several nurseries, and private gardens. This will surely be a well-attended and memorable trip. If you live in central Florida and wish to receive a very enjoyable quarterly newsletter (there are many non-local members, even international members), I hope that you will consider joining CFPACS.

MEMBERSHIP CHAIR:
Jeremy Evanchesky
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Aiphanes minima at Leu Gardens (photo by Libby Luedeke)

Memorial

Stanley Kiem, the last surviving original member of the International Palm Society, passed away at age 91 in March of this year. Mr. Kiem was one of 10 individuals personally selected by founder Dent Smith in 1956 to form the IPS. Mr. Kiem was the superintendent of Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden (FTBG) for many years and lived on a nearby property festooned with plants. He had a second home on Big Pine Key. He was a long-time member and office holder with the South Florida Palm Society (SFPS). In 2016, the SFPS planted a tree (*Coccothrinax* sp. "azul") in his honor at the Palmetum of his alma mater, The University of Miami.

In 1965, Mr. Kiem collected *Hyphaene compressa* in Tanzania. Today it graces the grounds of FTBG with multiple branches a full fifteen feet above the ground. One would hope that when IPS members have the good fortune to visit this plant, they will think of Stanley.



New Lifetime Members

On behalf of our 100% volunteer Board of Directors, I would like to recognize and thank our newest lifetime member of the IPS:

Dale S. Kammerlohr

Our mission to preserve palms in habitat requires like-minded plant conservationists like you! Please consider supporting our society by encouraging new memberships with fellow palm and tropical plant enthusiasts.



New Tiered Membership Options

The **International Palm Society** proudly introduces a new tiered membership program. Please help us meet our mission of conservation, research and education, and enjoy the many benefits of being an IPS member.



Free Membership* includes:

Access to Palmtalk.

An invitation to participate in free webinars and access to the free webinar library.

The monthly IPS newsletter sent via email.



Electronic Membership (\$40 per year or \$100 for three years) includes all the above plus:

Our journal, *Palms*, in digital format, sent via email and access to all *Palms* back issues.

An invitation to participate in premium content webinars and access to the premium content webinar library.

Biennial travel with the IPS.



Print Membership (\$60 per year or \$150 for three years) includes all the above plus:

A printed copy of *Palms* delivered by mail

Lifetime and benefactor level supporters may, at their discretion, choose to receive the digital format or the print edition of *Palms*.

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