



THE INTERNATIONAL PALM SOCIETY

Mar. 2021

NEWSLETTER

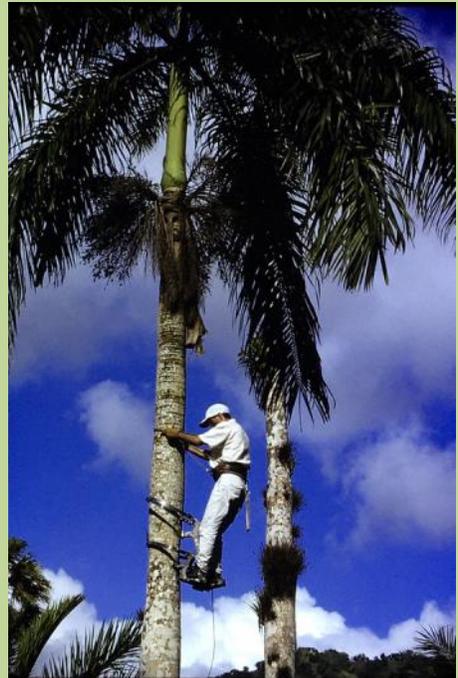
Sixty-Five Years of the International Palm Society

Illuminating the synergy between palm botanists and our mission of research, education, and conservation, scientists and devoted enthusiasts are invited to share their rich experiences. In this issue, PALMS co-editor and IPS Director Dr. Scott Zona tells his story:

My interest in palms began in high school with a seedling of *Drymophleous litigiousus* given to me by a friend, who had purchased it from a Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society palm sale. My only source of information about this uncommonly cultivated palm was McCurrach's *Palms of the World* from the local public library. That book, with its black-and-white photos and phrases like "this little-known palm...", set me on a path of wanting to know more about the family. My fascination, or by then, obsession, grew once I arrived at the University of Florida and discovered *Principes* (the forerunner to *PALMS*) in the university's library and Langlois' *Supplement to the Palms of the World* at a local bookshop (purchased for \$25 on March 6, 1978 – the receipt is still tucked in the book). Langlois' fuzzy, grainy photos only increased my desire to know more about these fabulous plants.

I joined the IPS sometime in 1980, while I was still a Horticulture student at UF. By the time I started the M.S. program, I had switched to Botany and decided to study palms. *Principes* was huge inspiration for me in those early, pre-internet days. It showed me what kinds of research was being done and by whom, and it had better photos than either McCurrach or Langlois. Hal Moore's articles about his collecting trips also brought home for me the fact that scientists need to communicate their findings to the broadest possible audience, not just other scientists. His articles, along with others that appeared in *Principes*, were an inspiration to me as I pursued my post-graduate studies in palms and wanted to write about my work with these amazing plants.

The IPS supported my studies materially when I was awarded an endowment grant in 1990 to purchase tree-climbing equipment. The device, called a Swiss Tree Bicycle, was instrumental in helping me collect and study *Roystonea* species in the Caribbean. The Swiss tree bicycle did not have the precision one associates with Swiss-made products, nor was it as easy as riding a bike. Nevertheless, it was invaluable, and without it, my study of these majestic palms would not have been as successful.



Sixty-Five Years of the International Palm Society

In 1995, as I planned a field trip for my study of *Veitchia*, I realized I would have a flight lay-over in New Zealand. I turned to the IPS Roster and contacted an IPS member in Auckland, the first name on the list. Keith Boyer could not have been more welcoming or more willing to take me in, show me around his amazing country, and share his love of palms. There is great camaraderie in our society.

I became more involved in the IPS in 1999 when Libby Besse recruited me to become an associate editor for *PALMS*, and in 2000, when Natalie Uhl retired, I took over as co-editor with John Dransfield. John and I continue to do our best to create a journal that has broad appeal. Over the years, we have introduced features and changes to keep the journal fresh and interesting, control costs, and establish an online presence. I am proud of our society's journal. I am proud that it appears in so many university libraries and digital indexing services and continues to publish new, trustworthy information of lasting value. I hope *PALMS* is the source of inspiration and information for other young palm researchers as it was for me when I was starting my research career.

The IPS Biennial meetings have played a huge role in my development as a researcher in palms and other tropical plants and in networking with other palm specialists throughout the world. The Biennials introduced me to palms in other countries, their importance in local cultures, and the threats they face. Biennial meetings are like palm boot-camps... but without the calisthenics. The first Biennial that I attended was the 1998 meeting in Thailand, and I'll never forget seeing Nong Nooch Tropical Garden's amazing collections or our thrilling hike through the forest of Khao Yai National Park. My second biennial was New Caledonia. All of us who attended that Biennial remember the fascinating palms and the helicopters that ferried us up and down Mt. Panié. I still use photos from those Biennials in lectures

and teaching. I have attended every subsequent Biennial, and each one has expanded my knowledge and appreciation for these "Princes of the Plant Kingdom."



Dr. Scott Zona embarking on the Treetop Walk on a rainy day in Singapore's MacRitchie Nature Trail & Reservoir Park. 2016 Borneo & Singapore Biennial. Photo by Dr. Adrian Loo.

IPS Affiliate Showcase

The International Palm Society boasts over 30 affiliates. While the IPS focuses on its mission of research, education, and conservation, local clubs provide members with garden tours, growing tips and access to rare palms. Furthermore, many publish highly desirable periodicals which are valued by many enthusiasts far afield. For this reason it is common for IPS members to belong to more than one local chapter. This month:

Palm Society of South Texas

by Chuck Malloy, Vice President of PSST and IPS Life Member

It is no secret to Rio Grande Valley natives and many regular visitors to the South Texas region the palm trees that line our streets are a revered staple, representative of our tropical terrain and unique coastal climate. In fact, people who travel or are returning home to the region often claim they know they're in "the Valley" when they see the landmark, lush columns of palm trees lining the interstate of Willacy County as part of the "Tropical Trail" that extends well into the border town of Brownsville, Texas. Indeed, the passion and intent for the preservation of palms are what brings us together as members of the International Palm Society. Down here in Texas, it is what connected residents from Houston to San Antonio to Corpus Christi and the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) to create a South Texas chapter of palm tree enthusiasts in the mid-nineties.

The Palm Society of South Texas', (PSST), roots go back to 1996, when a small group of about 24 palm enthusiasts met in Donna, TX, for their first meeting. After this initial collaboration, members decided to meet at homes of other founders or at botanical sites to collect palms, expand on their education of palms and discuss expansion opportunities for member participation throughout the South Texas region. Geographically speaking, "South Texas" is Houston, San Antonio and Austin, as well as South to the Mexico border. The extreme deep south region is the Rio Grande Valley, (RGV) and it borders Mexico on the Rio Grande River as well as the Coast of the Gulf of Mexico. The southernmost tip of Texas ends at the southern end of the "Texas Tropical Trail." The USDA planting zones range is from 8b to 10a, generally speaking, with some exceptions to our region. While technically, there is only one native palm, the *Sabal mexicana*, in our area, the *Washingtonia robusta* appears to have naturalized. That debate continues.

Some of the founding members of PSST were either members of the Houston Chapter of the Palm Society, (no longer a viable organization), the IPS, or newcomers. Bill Bittle, an IPS and Houston chapter member, wanted to create a South Texas Chapter, as Houston was a distance away. Bittle and Lloyd Van Epps co-founded PSST to encompass the RGV and Corpus Christi regions. The first meeting was at Van Epps' home in Donna, TX. The founding members, several of whom we still have around, met and socialized. They decided their expectations would involve writing articles and sharing research of different palms. As the newly formed chapter had an all-too familiar passion for palms, they also took it upon themselves to trade and buy palms to introduce into the South Texas landscape. In fact, we currently have one member who has over 300 species of palms on his four-acre homesite in the RGV.

IPS Affiliate Showcase

Throughout the founding process, members assessed themselves when they felt the need for buying palms or any community outreach that was suggested to promote the preservation of these beautiful trees. They developed the creation of officers and eventually a bank account. They also kept minutes of their meetings.

What started with 24 palmists sharing knowledge and trading palm trees is now up to 124 family units of membership. While most of our members are based in the South Texas Region of the RGV, Corpus Christi, Houston, Austin and San Antonio, our membership is certainly not limited. We feel fortunate and proud to say we have members in Texas, Florida, Alabama, Tennessee, Iowa, California, South Africa, France, Germany, and Spain, to mention a few.

Over the years, PSST has strengthened the community through donations to botanical gardens throughout the country, donations to IPS causes, and contribution or volunteer involvement to build palm habitats in our local communities. Several of our members are also IPS members. With several PSST members who have served or are still serving with the IPS many as officers and directors, we are actively immersed and proud to be part of the IPS.

PSST workday at the Gladys Porter Zoo.



IPS Affiliate Showcase

As the PSST chapter evolved into 2020, we were trying to move more in the direction of doing more for the communities and needed funding for this. We started with educating the public on palms and other plants, which involved palm maintenance, disease, care, and pruning. Several members had been discussing moving toward a non-profit status as it appeared we might meet the requirements. It eventually was brought to a unanimous vote to become a 501(c) 3 organization. We obtained non-profit status in Fall of 2020 as well as incorporated through the Secretary of State.

Newly certified as a non-profit, we ventured out by contacting organizations that had gardens and or botanical environments that we felt we could collaborate with and contribute to. We were able to establish a partnership with the Gladys Porter Zoo in Brownsville, TX to help design and plant palms in various habitats. Our first assignment was the Cassowary habitat. We intend to enhance this habitat with as many Australian and or New Guinea native palms. We have also contributed to the Lemur habitat by donating a *Bismarckia nobilis*. Our plans are still ongoing and even though the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent Valentine's Vortex freeze are our nemesis, we will continue to accomplish this task as well as other opportunities that arise.



Planting Rosie's palm at the Gladys Porter Zoo.

At the writing of this article, PSST, as well as the rest of Texas, is recovering from the aforementioned devastating freeze. As for the survival of our member's palms, it is still in limbo pending recovery from the damage. As palm enthusiasts, this was not only a shock to our community but an immense challenge to the recovery of our beloved trees. We have hope and are all diligently trying to save them and nurture them back to health. Any suggestions for those in IPS who have weathered any freezes or unexpected weather events are welcome, as we all continue to promote and advocate for the preservation of palms in our communities.

For more information on PSST, or opportunities to connect, please reach out to: palmsofthesouthtexas@gmail.com or <https://m.facebook.com/PalmSocietyOfSouthTexasPsst/>

Celebrate 65!

Your participation in the 65th anniversary campaign will allow the IPS many more years of research, education, and conservation. Fundraising for this endeavor will close on September 1, 2021. And then we can look forward to our 70th anniversary in 2026.

The Dent Smith Founder's Society*

Gold: \$10,000

Silver: \$5000

Bronze: \$1000

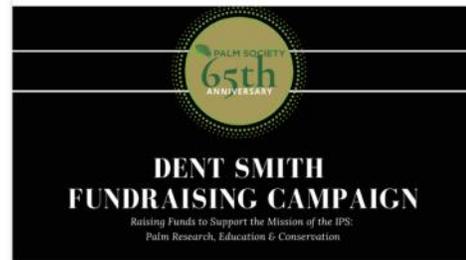
*All Founder's Society level contributors will be Recognized in the December, 2021 PALMS journal.

Other Donation levels: \$500, \$250, \$100, \$50, \$25 or \$10.

The International Palm Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, Federal Tax I.D. 59-0829820 All or a portion of this gift may be tax deductible, less any goods or services received. Consult with your tax advisor regarding deductibility.

The International Palm Society's 65th Anniversary Fundraising Campaign

Your participation will ensure many more years of palm related research, education and conservation. Please help the IPS by donating today!



[CLICK TO DONATE](#)

IPS Webinar

Join us for our next webinar when Andrew Henderson presents "Palms of Vietnam." The event will take place on March 27th, 2021, 3pm EDT. Register in advanced for this webinar: <https://palms.org/virtual-webinar-the-palms-of-vietnam/>



Andrew Henderson, Botanist/Palm Specialist has worked at New York Botanical Garden since 1987. During his tenure at the Garden, Mr. Henderson has been primarily involved in systematic research on the palm family. He has revised approximately 30 genera comprising 800 species. His revisionary work has been based on extensive field work in various countries in both the American and Asian tropics. Additionally, Henderson has always been interested in the natural history of palms which led him to publish several studies on pollination.

Over the years, Henderson has had the opportunity to develop guides for specialized botanical knowledge for a wider audience. In fact, Henderson and his colleagues have just completed a field guide to the palm of Vietnam and published a revision of the rattan genus *Calamus*.

He has been a member of the International Palm Society since 1982, and several of his research projects have been funded by the Society.

PIMBY (Palms In My Back Yard): The Florida Keys

This month's feature, palms in my backyard, is courtesy of Andrew Street, assistant curator of palms at the Montgomery Botanical Center.

2010 was the first time I saw them. I don't believe anyone had any large ones at that time. *Copernicia baileyana* had been a trade secret for a while, but in 2010, *C. fallaensis* was just starting to be seen in private gardens.

If somehow, you are not aware, in almost all aspects it is a step above *C. baileyana*. For starters, it's faster and reputedly a bit more rotund, though thickness of trunk isn't so uniform in either species. *Copernicia baileyana* can be silver or green – and anything in between, while *C. fallaensis* is almost always a bright silvery blue. *Copernicia fallaensis* has fewer fronds, but they are larger than those of *C. baileyana* and more advertising of opulence. The pointed diamond shaped leaves manifest in the older specimens, and when this happens, all other players fold.



My father got a call, late summer of 2020 from a friend in the Lower Keys. He told him not only were his three *Copernicia fallaensis* flowering, but they had set fruit, and it looked like it was ripe – would you like some? My dad drove down that morning, past the 7-mile bridge, all the way to the edge of the Atlantic.

And there they were, steps from the Ocean. The tips of their leaflets defying the eyes focus, to create that unique shimmer for which these palms are known. These very palms had gone through countless storm surges, being completely inundated with salt water. They have stood strong and straight under

PIMBY

185-mph winds, and now they were offering up a new generation of very deserving palm into cultivation. With a ladder, my father picked and simultaneously wondered, how many people have actually hand-picked *Copernicia fallaensis* seeds... a great reminder of something so special.

Fast forward to 3 months and they have germinated at a very high success rate. This brings up another difference, compared to *C. baileyana* – it readily sets seed outside of habitat.



Classified

Divine Tours cordially invites IPS members on a delightful garden vacation this June 5–11, 2021 featuring the Philadelphia Flower Show and the historical estates and gardens of the Dupont families in the Brandywine Valley. Land program includes first class hotels, private coach transportation, gourmet meals, and all the garden and museum visits. IPS will receive a donation of \$150 for every member that registers on this exclusive tour. Please see link for details <https://bit.ly/3bFlop2> or contact info@divinetours.com

Complementary Tropical Plant Societies

The Heliconia Society International (HSI) is a very collegial group of tropical plant lovers. The HSI publishes a quarterly newsletter, brimming with gorgeous photos, growing tips, and scientific research. It's always a welcome sight in my mailbox. Like us, they sponsor a biennial that looks very enticing. Even hardened palm-nuts tend to drool when confronted with these beauties. It's not surprising that several members of the IPS are also happily registered with the HSI.

JOIN THE HELICONIA SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL

www.heliconia.org

USD \$25/year PDF quarterly Bulletin

Dedicated to all 8 families
of Zingiberales.



The purpose of HSI is to increase the enjoyment and understanding of Heliconia and related plants of the order Zingiberales through education, research and communication. The quarterly Bulletin covers a wide range of interests, from cultivation research to plant exploration to news from our biennial international conferences and tours. Visit www.heliconia.org to see archived Bulletins online.