



THE INTERNATIONAL PALM SOCIETY

Jan. 2022

NEWSLETTER

A Visit to the Kampong by Andy Hurwitz

The Kampong (Malay for village) is a marvelous treat to visit for any devotee of tropical horticulture. Sited perfectly on Biscayne Bay in Coconut Grove, Florida, this was the home and garden of legendary plant explorer David Fairchild and his wife, Marian (the youngest daughter of Alexander Graham Bell).

The original Fairchild home was completed in 1928 and was influenced by the Javanese compounds that Dr. Fairchild admired while doing botanical research in Indonesia. There is certainly a tropical feel to the estate, with oolitic limestone riddled with fossils, rosewood stairs and paneling, and the liberal use of a perfect shade of southeast Asian-inspired red paint.

The Fairchilds lived at The Kampong from 1928 until Marian's death in 1962 (David died in 1954). Fortunately, the land was purchased next by Catherine Sweeney, herself a botanist and ardent preservationist. As a result, the garden was bequeathed to the Pacific Tropical Botanical Garden which is now the National Tropical Botanical Garden (NTBG). The Kampong is the mainland garden of the NTBG which administers four other botanical preserves in Hawaii.



The entry gates to The Kampong, beyond which lie 9 acres of tropical horticulture nirvana.



A Visit to the Kampong



The NTBG, like the International Palm Society, is dedicated to the preservation of tropical plants worldwide. A membership would serve as a nice companion to our society.

<https://ntbg.org/support/membership/>

Kampong Director Craig Morell, a jovial and erudite gentleman, whose affection for the site is irresistible.

Pseudophoenix sargentii, this palm is endemic to Elliott Key (the second northernmost island of the Florida Keys), just 7 miles offshore.



A Visit to the Kampong



Veitchia winin and *Licuala spinosa* surrounding the main house.



Licuala spinosa

Kerriodoxa elegans amongst tropical flora



The original wedding tree “Fairchild Fig,” *Ficus subcordata*, planted in the 1940s.



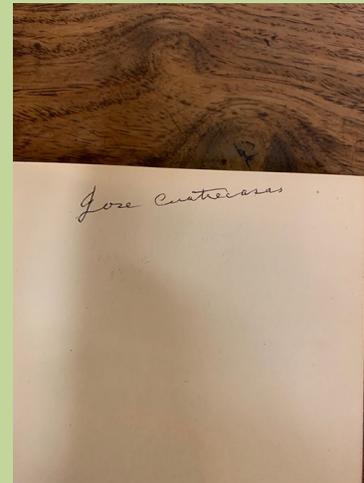
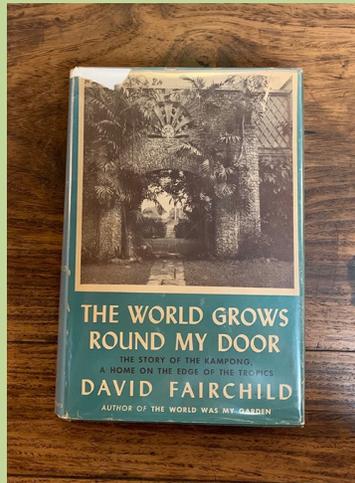
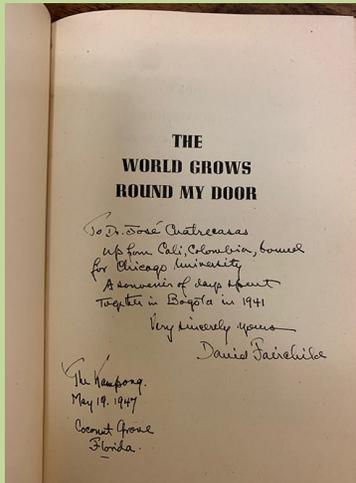
A Visit to the Kampong

Perhaps the most Zen spot in Miami, The Point is where Marian Fairchild fell in love with the property. Standing here, looking out onto Biscayne Bay, she announced to her husband: “David we’ve got to have this place!” However, the quietude of this perfect day belies an unfortunate seasonal danger. In 2017 hurricane Irma claimed 8 feet of lawn beyond the coconut (I suppose giving the manatees some extra frolic room). The next day it took Craig over three hours to clamber to the point (typically a short leisurely stroll), and he got lost twice! On the horizon are the condos and high-rises of Key Biscayne.



A Visit to the Kampong

David Fairchild's memoir of his beloved Kampong, "The World Grows Round My Door", was published in 1947. This is a signed first edition inscribed by Dr. Fairchild to his friend, Dr. José Cuatrecasas (1903–1996). Dr. Cuatrecasas was a formidable botanist in his own right, known for research on high elevation flora in the Andes mountains. He was a founder of the Organization for Flora Neotropica and the Smithsonian established an award, for excellence in tropical botany, in his name. Dr. Cuatrecasas' signature is seen on the front endpaper.



Past Presidents of the IPS

In the last issue of the Newsletter, the list of past presidents inadvertently omitted David Barry Jr. and had the incorrect term for Nat DeLeon. We regret the errors and present the correct chronology here:

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|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1956–1957 Dent Smith, Florida | 1980–1982 Paul Drummond, Florida |
| 1957–1960 Dr. Walter Hodge, Florida | 1982–1984 Richard Douglas, California |
| 1960–1962 Eugene Kitzke, Wisconsin | 1984–1986 Allan Bredeson, California |
| 1962–1964 David Barry Jr., California | 1986–1988 Edward McGehee, Florida |
| 1964–1966 Nat J. DeLeon, Florida | 1988–1992 Jules Gervais, Hawaii |
| 1966–1968 Otto Martens, California | 1992–1996 Jim Cain, Texas |
| 1968–1970 Dr. Jerome P. Keuper, Florida | 1996–2000 Phil Bergman, California |
| 1970–1972 Dr. John Popenoe, Florida | 2000–2004 Horace Hobbs, Texas |
| 1972–1974 Kenneth (Ken) C. Foster,
California | 2004–2008 Paul Craft, Florida |
| 1974–1976 Dr. U. A. Young, Florida | 2008–2012 Bo-Göran Lundkvist, Hawaii |
| 1976–1978 Myron Kinnach, California | 2012–2016 Leland Lai, California |
| 1978–
1980 Don Carlsmith, Hawaii | 2016–2021 Ray Hernandez, Florida |

Save the Species: *Sabinaria magnifica*

The IPS is partnering with Salvamontes to Save the Species, *Sabinaria magnifica*.

To preserve the Serranía, Salvamontes will acquire about 100 hectares of rainforest at La Paloma camp, with an additional 130 hectares to follow. Not only will this result in the successful conservation of *Sabinaria magnifica* in habitat, but at least another 30 species of palms, along with the jaguars, monkeys, and toucans.

Our Save the Species effort directly targets rainforest and habitat protection. To do so we will provide financial support to in-situ conservation, upkeep, and preservation. Acquisition of this patch of rainforest is the first step towards the successful conservation of this extraordinary palm genus. Additionally, we will continue to sponsor ex-situ conservation of *Sabinaria magnifica*. Furthermore, this fundraiser will enable researchers, such as Dr. Bernal, and others, to continue their scientific inquiries.

The *Sabinaria magnifica* fundraiser will contribute toward saving this magnificent palm in habitat, and the diverse rainforest within the critically threatened Darién Gap. This fundraising event was launched on Giving Tuesday, November 30 and concludes August 1, 2022. Please consider supporting our campaign by clicking through the link below, or going to <https://palms.org/save-the-species/>.

[CLICK TO GIVE](https://palms.org/save-the-species/)



Photos courtesy of Dr. Rodrigo Bernal

Interview with Robert Blenker, the 25th President of the IPS

Andy Hurwitz: Congratulations, Robert, let's start with the obvious question, why palms?

Robert Blenker: Palms occur in many of the world's most threatened ecosystems. They are a "charismatic indicator species" around which entire habitats evolve. Just as the magnificent tiger or elephant represent their environments, so do the *Tahina* of Madagascar, the *Sabinaria* of the Darién or the *Ceroxylon* of the northern Andes. To conserve them, you must conserve their habitats and in so doing, you secure the future for a myriad of other species that also depend on those habitats such as various species of lemurs or the spectacled bear. Stately or unique palms put a face on what to some might otherwise be obscure walls of green. Furthermore, the conservation of palms helps to preserve diverse societies, given their cultural and economic significance of products derived from palms.

AH: What goals do you hope to accomplish during your tenure as our president?

RB: My agenda for this term is perhaps too broad. However, as the world's premier and largest palm society, I would like to focus the IPS on a few key issues:

1. Growing the endowment to further conservation and research. The grants we make each year are crucial for driving seminal and original research into a broad range of cutting-edge topics. Our grants enable grantees to conduct critical field work, to acquire advanced genetic testing, and perform other lab-based analysis that advance our understanding of palms, their genetics, their phylogeny, and their dispersal throughout the world.
2. Strengthening ties to affiliates around the world. An organization like the International Palm Society is only as good as its members. We seek to strengthen and, in some cases, re-establish close and meaningful ties with our affiliate organizations. To do this, we are focused on direct outreach, as well as enhanced content of IPS services and materials that will create value and promote learning throughout the palm community. We hope to continue the webinar series which was very popular during lockdowns, as well as enhance PalmTalk, access to online resources and provide affiliates to share their stories to a broader audience.
3. Streamlining the Biennial Process. As perhaps one of the most valuable assets of the IPS, we hope to streamline the biennial process, ensuring an uninterrupted series of once-in-a-lifetime events, while at the same time, expanding our mid-term meetings to make them more inclusive.
4. Advancing the Conservation Agenda. Specifically, our Save the Species campaign has targeted the *Sabinaria magnifica* in the Darién region of Colombia. The IPS is working to mobilize sufficient resources to ensure an area large enough to protect a genetically viable population of *Sabinaria* is preserved in perpetuity in habitat. I encourage all to visit www.palms.org to learn more about this important conservation initiative.

AH: Please tell us your favorite biennial memory.

RB: Perhaps my favorite biennial was the Singapore/Sarawak/Borneo biennial. It was truly a phenomenal experience as much for the environment and culture as for the company. Led by some of our members with decades of experience in the region, we were able to enjoy an intimate visit to some of the most unique and threatened habitats in the world. Changes in the environment as witnessed over the span of 40 years or more became real as our hosts shared histories of individual palms. Local conservationists were able to share their challenges in protecting habitat, and we left with a feeling of hope for

Interview with Robert Blenker

on-going conservation efforts and some tangible ways in which to assist. I find that the biennials are one of the most compelling reasons to be a member of IPS. During a biennial I am able to spend quality field time with a vast array of members - from some of the world's foremost palm experts from Kew, Montgomery, and Fairchild Garden to members who have spent their lives cultivating and commercializing palms to people like me who are simply enthusiastic about this magnificent family. The richness of experience demonstrated by our members is humbling.

AH: And now for the most dreaded question of them all, please name your favorite palm (and don't use the "I can't pick my favorite child" excuse).

RB: I have two. Firstly, the palms in my collection all have some significance. They have either been cultivated from seed I have collected on trips or represent palms I have seen or interacted with on trips where collection was not permitted. So, my two favorites are the Gru-Gru (*Acrocomia aculeata*) and the Thatch Palm (*Attalea cohune*). My relationship with the Gru-Gru is somewhat one of love/hate. I enjoyed the fruit while traveling and working in the Caribbean. And the seed comes from the sustainable agriculture farm of a friend. So, every time I look at the palm I am transported to the hills of Grenada. However, if you know the *Acrocomia*, you are familiar with its wicked thorns that sometimes impale birds or the odd unwary squirrel. Its thorns, running the entire length of the trunk, as well as along the rachis, are not to be trifled with.

My second favorite palm is the *Attalea cohune*, or as they called it in Guanacaste, the "*palma de techo*" as it was the preferred palm from whose fronds most roofs were thatched. And, it is the palm often used to make "*coyol*" - the sometimes viscous, fermented palm wine popular during the dry months. I lived several years below a roof thatched with *Attalea* fronds. And I spent many hours on porches, or in a rocker under the shade of a mango tree enjoying coyol with friends and neighbors. It brings back fond memories of time in Central and South America.



Acrocomia aculeata as seen on the 2006 IPS Biennial in the Dominican Republic. Photos by Scott Zona

Save the Date! IPS 2022 Biennial in Hawaii

Sunday, October 9 thru Saturday, October 15, 2022.

I am thrilled to re-introduce Don Hodel to our newsletter pages. Don is the world's acknowledged expert on the genus *Pritchardia*. This is the first of several species that he will describe in upcoming issues (a field guide of sorts) for the identification and differentiation of the species that we might encounter during the Hawaii biennial.

Pritchardia in Hawaii: *Pritchardia arcina*

Pritchardia arcina, endemic to East Maui in the incredibly wet forests on the windward slopes of Haleakalā, is a tall, imposing, and handsome palm with a splendid canopy of large leaves distinctly silvery gray on the underside, as here near Nāhiku, on the famous "Road to Hana." Inflorescences, composed

mostly of one panicle holding the flowers and large fruits, are longer than the petioles, which have abundant fibers clothing their base. Photos by D R Hodel.



Parting Shot: Biennial Memories (and Adventures!)

Queensland 1988: On the road to Mt. Lewis. Or should I say the IPS actually BUILDING the road to Mt. Lewis. Apparently, the bus was “wrecked” about twenty minutes later. Eventually they arrived happily to view *Archontophoenix pupurea* in habitat. Photo by David Tanswell.

