

entails is further dealt with elsewhere in this issue.

#### Newsletter

Great things are happening in California these days. Not only do we have a new Assistant Editor there, but we have a new publication. Since the California members are scattered over a large area, some of them have decided that they need better communications. So they are starting to publish NEWSLETTER, a four-page leaflet which will appear every other month and will go to all members in California, containing information of special interest to them. Mr. James P. Specht, 4398 Aragon Way, San Diego, Calif. 92115, will be the editor, and Mr. Kenneth C. Foster, 3822 Larkstone Drive, Orange, Calif. 92667, will do the printing. This paper should do a lot toward keeping up the interest of the Western Chapter.

#### Gentes Herbarum

The Liberty Hyde Bailey Hortorium of Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y. has published, over the years, some ten volumes of plant studies, called *Gentes Herbarum*. These studies are printed in sep-

arate fascicles, and are chiefly used as exchange publications with other botanical institutions and libraries. A good many of them consist of palm studies, with descriptions and illustrations of real value to serious palm students.

Many of these fascicles are now out of print and unobtainable except in reference libraries, which are not always conveniently located.

It has occurred to some of our young and enthusiastic members that with modern methods of reproduction it might be feasible to reprint the palm fascicles and offer them to Palm Society members who would like to own a set. This project is still in the planning stage, and all details are not yet available, but we hope to have more news for you in a forthcoming issue of PRINCIPES.

#### Charter and By-Laws

Mr. Kenneth C. Foster has very kindly printed a number of sets of the Society's charter and by-laws. We shall be glad to send a copy of each to any member who asks for them.

LUCITA H. WAIT

## Fairchild Tropical Garden —

### A Short History

LUCITA H. WAIT

Fairchild Tropical Garden is a combination botanical and introduction garden, educational and research institution, and beautiful park. It is situated ten miles south of downtown Miami, Florida, quite close to Biscayne Bay and is actually in the municipality of Coral Gables. It consists of eighty-three acres, twenty-five of which constitute the Montgomery Palmetum, one of the more complete palm collections in America. Other palms are to be found growing through-

out the Garden, in the Bailey Palm Glade, in the Garden Club of America amphitheatre and in the lowland area, for example.

This Garden is the creation of two exceptional men: David G. Fairchild and Robert H. Montgomery. It is because of their imagination, enthusiasm and energy that the Garden exists and has become internationally known.

David Fairchild left a record of his life and work in four books, in which

he told in detail about his many travels as a plant explorer. These books are: *Exploring For Plants* (New York, The Macmillan Co. 1930), *The World Was My Garden* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), *Garden Islands of the Great East* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943) and *The World Grows 'Round My Door* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947). As Chief of the United States Department of Agriculture Seed and Plant Introduction Section and one of its accredited plant explorers he performed a tremendously valuable service to the agriculture of this country by introducing plants of great economic worth. He was keenly interested also in ornamental plants, and very specially the palms. By the time the idea of a tropical botanical garden was put forth he had retired and was living, with Mrs. Fairchild, in an unusual house of Javanese inspiration on Biscayne Bay, near Miami, on four acres of land covered with plants he had collected and introduced from many lands.

Robert H. Montgomery had had a very different life. His father, a Methodist minister, became ill when Robert was fourteen years old, so it was necessary for him to leave school and help support the family. In his autobiography, *Fifty Years of Accountancy* (New York, The Ronald Press, 1939), he tells briefly about those early years of struggle. In 1889, at the age of sixteen, he was hired as office boy by the bookkeeping and auditing firm of John Heins, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Earnest and industrious, he rose rapidly to junior, then senior, accountant. On January 1, 1898 he and three of his associates in the Heins firm formed the partnership of Lybrand, Ross Brothers and Montgomery, now one of the oldest and most prominent firms of public accountants in America.

Financially independent at last, he

built a fine home at Cos Cob, Connecticut, where he began to indulge his interest in plants by making a collection of conifers which he eventually donated to the New York Botanical Garden. His old friend, George P. Brett, also a collector of conifers, had built a winter home on Biscayne Bay, not far from Dr. Fairchild's house. Becoming fascinated with palms, he finally persuaded Colonel Montgomery to settle near him and start a friendly rivalry in collecting palms. With his usual intense interest and drive, Colonel Montgomery soon was scouring the world for palms and more palms. In a few years his seventy-acre estate had become known as one of the finest privately-owned palm collections in the world. Now interested strangers appeared at his door, asking permission to see the exotic plants. This became rather a burden, and one day the question arose: "Why is there not a public park full of tropical and subtropical plants which can be visited by anyone without having to ask permission?" No one seemed to have a satisfactory answer, so the two friends began talking to interested groups and individuals, promoting the idea and asking for support. Before long the Fairchild Tropical Garden Association was formed, with a membership which has steadily grown through thirty years until at this writing it numbers approximately one thousand seven hundred. Membership dues are an important element in the support of the Garden, besides which many members make large contributions of money, time and effort in fund-raising projects.

It was now 1937, and time to begin the search for the best possible site. A committee, consisting of Colonel Montgomery, Dr. Fairchild, Mr. George Brett and Dr. Thomas Barbour of Harvard University made a thorough study and concluded that the very strip of land on which the Fairchild, Brett and Mont-

gomery homes were situated was very probably the most frost-free bit of land on the mainland of southeastern United States. One deciding factor was a large and beautiful mamey apple tree (*Mammea americana*) growing there, which evidently had withstood many winters in spite its tenderness to cold. The eighty-three acres immediately adjoining Matheson Hammock (a large tract of undisturbed native growth donated to the Dade County Parks Department by the Matheson family), were acquired. The struggling young Association was not equipped to develop and maintain the entire acreage, so fifty-six acres were deeded to the County Parks Department on condition that they be kept an integral part of Fairchild Garden. The "County side," as it is familiarly known, contains the tree, shrub, vine and succulent collections, which are maintained by the Parks Department; the remaining twenty-five acres, originally owned by Mrs. Montgomery and donated by her to the Garden, were reserved for the Montgomery Palmetum. In their deed of gift Colonel and Mrs. Montgomery specified that the name of their dear friend David Fairchild should remain always a part of the title of the Garden.

On March 23rd, 1938, the Garden was formally dedicated, with a large group of men prominent in the botanical world present. After the speeches\* a number of trees and palms were planted in honor of well-known Florida plant pioneers. With that beginning, a constantly-growing stream of plants has found a home at Fairchild Tropical Garden. In spite of many misfortunes, such as freezes, droughts, lightning, hurricanes and hurricane tides, the Garden has managed

to grow into a world-known institution. Students of tropical plants come to study its collections, a much easier task than going searching for them in far-away jungles.

But in 1938 much preliminary work had to be done before the planting could really begin. A well-known landscape architect with experience in tropical landscape design, William Lyman Phillips, was engaged to draw up the plan. In cooperation with Noel Chamberlain of New York, the entire eighty-three acres were surveyed, the principal features delineated, the future buildings given their locations, the roads and lakes mapped out. A multitude of small stakes were placed, marking roads, paths and irregular planting plots, and there was not much of the look of a garden about it. All this preliminary work was necessary, however, before the planting could begin.

Next came beautiful oolitic limestone ("coral rock") walls, hand-laid by the young men working in the depression-time Civilian Conservation Corps. These impoverished boys, mostly city-bred, performed wonders in setting up the low walls, building rock pillars for the vine pergola, helping to dredge out the lakes, lay water lines and blast holes in the limerock to be filled with rich soil from the lake beds for forthcoming trees, palms and other plants.

Of course, buildings are required, and the first one was a gift from Colonel Montgomery's partners, in celebration of his fifty years in the accounting firm. The \$10,000 built a handsome cream-colored limestone home for the botanical library and palm-products museum, with offices in a wing at the rear. It was necessary to have a caretaker-guardian living on the grounds, so the next building was a two-story house for him. Then came glasshouses and slathouse

\*See Wait, *Fairchild Tropical Garden — The First Ten Years* (New York, The Ronald Press, 1948).



1. Illustrative of how the palms are the predominating plants in this part of the Garden. The building houses the library and palm products museum where the author, Lucita H. Wait, formerly served as librarian and curator. Photograph by Nixon Smiley.

to care for the new plants and seedlings until they were large enough to be set out in the ground. (The early arrivals had been cared for in the propagating houses on the Montgomery estate.)

Already, lectures, classes and plant shows had become a prominent part of the Garden's activities, so an auditorium became a real necessity. Colonel Montgomery owned a piece of business property in New York City which he sold, using the proceeds to build the Nell Montgomery Garden House, an auditorium which has been used many times since for lectures, social functions, art and other types of shows. At one of the plant shows an effect of great dignity was achieved by using floor-to-ceiling columns which were really the trunks of

six magnificent royal palms (*Roystonea regia*) which had been killed by some accident of nature. In all the shows fronds and inflorescences of palms were featured, to the astonishment and delight of northern visitors, many of whom had never seen them before.

Other buildings were added, mostly through the generosity of the Garden's friends; the superintendent's office and records room, a service building, the Hawkes Laboratory donated by Mrs. Forbes Hawkes, the Davis House, given by the late Arthur Vining Davis, and recently a much-needed storage house. The funds for this building were raised by Mrs. O. C. Corbin, widow of a former president of the Garden Association and a member of The Palm Society.

Many other large gifts have contributed to the Garden's growth and to the enlargement of the endowment fund. Thousands of smaller gifts also have been gratefully received.

As was mentioned above, scientists are coming more and more to study the tropical and subtropical plants introduced and collected here. The laboratories which once seemed so ample, have become inadequate. Also, more propagating houses were needed but space was not available on the eighty-three acres. The former Mrs. Montgomery, widow of the Garden's founder and now Mrs. Alvin R. Jennings, has deeded a part of her estate to the Garden, to be known as the Montgomery Foundation, in memory of her first husband. On this land a director's house has been built, supplementary propagating houses and nursery installed, and now, the most ambitious project of all, the William J. Robbins Plant Science Building, with facilities for a number of scientists to work simultaneously. The National Science Foundation, Washington, D. C., allocated a grant of \$153,200 for this building which at this writing has almost been completed and will be dedicated in the spring of 1967. Serious botanical research can now be greatly expanded.

Meanwhile, literally hundreds of thousands of seeds and plants have arrived from the warmer areas of the world. Exchanges have been set up with botanical gardens, many expeditions have been undertaken, by both professional and amateur collectors, and individuals have sent seeds and plants by the thousand. Each shipment has been recorded in the accession books, then the seeds,

etc., planted. With the Garden's limited space only a few of the resultant seedlings can be set out on the grounds. The surplus are offered to the Association's members on Distribution Day, sold to members at certain times, or sold to the public at the time of the "Ramble" (the Garden's large fund-raising event). In this way new plants are disseminated, to be tried in new environments and under new conditions. Unfortunately, many do not survive, but some of them do, to add their distinctive features to the landscape.

A good deal of time is required to introduce and popularize a new plant. In Fairchild Garden's *Occasional Paper No. 1*, September 1, 1938, Dr. Fairchild described a new palm, then known as *Adonidia Merrillii* Beccari. After telling something of its history and stating that in its native Philippine Islands it is found only on limestone soils, he predicted a great future for it in the limestone areas of southern Florida. His prediction came true, for now, twenty-odd years later, this very handsome small palm, its generic name changed from *Adonidia* to *Veitchia*, has become one of the favorite dooryard plants, adding color and form wherever it grows. Because it thrives in limestone areas it will probably continue to be popular for many years.

Palms are the prominent feature of Fairchild Garden; its founders planned it so. They have been gathered together in a great collection where they can be studied at leisure. Having come from many places, their descendants will be disseminated to other places where they have not grown before, to be enjoyed and used by millions.