

Some Notes on Palms Growing in the Jacksonville Area of Florida

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The winters in Florida's northernmost large city—Jacksonville—are frequently startling severe in comparison with central Florida, southern Florida and coastal southern California. A series of articles on the palms growing in this area may therefore be of interest to the readers of *Principes*, particularly now that we have just gotten through one of the greatest freezes of the century—a freeze second only to the 1962 freeze in low temperature, but of first rank in duration (number of hours below freezing). The recent freeze began on the night of Tuesday, January 6, 1970, and continued until Sunday morning, January 11, 1970. During this period, 48 hours or more were below 32° F.; many of these hours were in the low twenties, with 18° F. being the lowest temperature generally reported. Only in the middle of the afternoons during a four-day stretch did the mercury rise above 32° F., and then only briefly.

We begin our series of articles with a few photos of, and comments on, one of the handsomest palms that can be grown in this area, which is subjected to occasional prolonged hard freezes. This particular palm, we feel, is as handsome as any growing in any area, tropical or subtropical. It is reported to be a natural cross between *Butia capitata* and *Arecastrum Romanzoffianum*.

A number of these presumed hybrids (perhaps twenty or more) exist in the Jacksonville area, but an even larger number exist in the Leesburg—Orlando areas in central Florida. The palm has the hardiness of the *Butia* and the

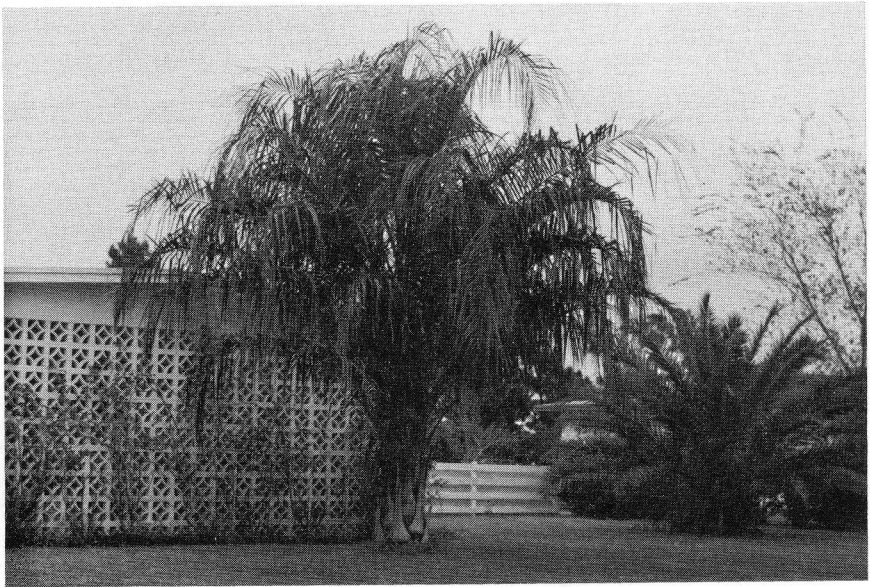
feathery fronds and tropical look of the *Arecastrum*. The 12° F. minimum of the freeze of 1962, however, damaged slightly some of the tips of the fronds on several of the smaller hybrids in this area. No damage has been noted to any of these hybrids in the recent freeze of January 7–12, 1970 (see Dent Smith's splendid article on cold damage in *Principes* 8: 26–39, 1964, in which he re-



1. An 18-year-old hybrid growing in the yard of Charles Raulerson, 14521 Plumosa Drive, Isle of Palms, Jacksonville Beach, Florida 32250. It has never bloomed. The smaller palm in the foreground is *Erythea armata* which also was undamaged in the recent prolonged hard freeze.



2. A hybrid about eight years old recently planted in the yard of William Theodore Waas, 5941 Caribbean Drive, Jacksonville, Florida 32211. The hybrid was undamaged in the recent freeze, but the *Arecastrum* on the left was severely injured. The small *Trachycarpus Fortunei* on the right, of course, is perhaps the hardiest of all palms.



3. This hybrid is located in the yard of Mr. Maurice Tipple on the corner of Starwan St. and Mathonia Ave. in Jacksonville. It is the most attractive hybrid the authors have seen. Note the large fruits shown in Fig. 4. At least one seed from these large fruits is reported by Mr. Tipple to have sprouted recently. The magnificent crown is exceptionally green, feathery, and dense.



ports on the cold tolerance of his hybrids).

On the more attractive of these hybrids, the fronds typically are 12-13 feet in length from trunk base to tip; the fronds are deep dark green in color, more so than either of its alleged parents. The shape of the fronds varies, apparently, according to its *Butia* parentage. Some of the hybrids may have had *Butia capitata* var. *strictor* parentage and hence have fronds that tend to sweep upward in a very graceful manner. We feel that the quality and color of the frond of this hybrid rivals that of the coconut palm, *Cocos nucifera*.

The trunk tends toward the stoutness of *Butia*, but in older hybrids the boots gradually drop off, revealing a smooth, grey-white trunk, but not as smooth as

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4. Fruits on the palm in Fig. 3.



5. These two hybrids are located on the strip between the sidewalk and street on the corner of Avondale Ave. and Oak St. in Jacksonville. Note the strict habit of the plant on the right. Each is about 20 years old and both produce large fruits but nothing is known of their viability. The plants have to be seen to appreciate their rich, dark green color and to note how strikingly different they are from *Butia capitata*.

that of its *Arecastrum* parent. Plants typically have 20 to 28 fronds in the crown, giving a much fuller appearance than the crowns of the *Arecastrum* and the *Butia*.

Some of these hybrids observed in the central Florida area look more like their *Butia* parent; but even when they are barely distinguishable from the *Butia*, they are unarmed—which is a dead giveaway as to its hybrid status; the petioles of true *Butia* are heavily armed.

The fruits vary from tiny pea size to the plump marble size of *Butia* and *Arecastrum*. No less an authority than Dent

Smith attests to the sterility of the seeds, although the sprouting of at least one seed from a recent crop from one particularly attractive specimen in this area has been reported recently. Seeds from the specimen mentioned are large and characteristically cocoid.

At least one or more of these hybrids has produced a few possibly viable seeds from time to time, but the seeds have not germinated because they were not planted under conditions favorable to germination. We would like to learn if readers have had any success in germinating seeds from these hybrids.

PALM BRIEFS

Interesting Exhibition Planned for Honolulu

From a brochure recently received we quote the following:

"Come September, Honolulu will be the site of a spectacular horticultural display showing the history of man's relationship to the plantlife of his environment. It's called Flora Pacifica 1970. It's a \$250,000 "ethno-botanic" exposition. And it will run 10 days, from September 11 to 20, at the giant Honolulu International Center Arena.

"Flora Pacifica deals specifically with the histories and cultures of all Pacific Basin people, past and present, by showing man's ingenuity using plant life for

food, to build homes, make clothes and implements. . . even to satisfying his gods.

"There will be 10 major life-size, walk-through pavilions, each a microcosm or perfect example of a specific culture or civilization which borders on the Pacific Ocean."

Palms should have a prominent place in such an exhibition. If the detailed description is accurate, a visit to Flora Pacifica should be of interest. Anyone wanting further information may write to Communications-Pacific, Inc., Suite 825-1600 Kapiolani Blvd., Honolulu, Hawaii 96814.

L. H. WAIT

CLASSIFIED SECTION

FOR SALE—Good copy of Blatter: Palms of British India. First check for \$67.00 takes it. Edwin A. Menninger, Box 217, Cashiers, North Carolina 28717.