

Unfortunately these beetles show a decided preference for choice plants and seem to be particularly fond of *Latania* and *Phoenix canariensis*.

While it has proven possible to grow with success a very large number of palms in this section of the country, it has also been found that many of the importations have been failures. No doubt some of the ultra-tropical ones do not like our occasional rather cool

temperatures; others may not like certain soil conditions, but it has been interesting to try them and several of the newer ones have proven most satisfactory. As more are being tried under various conditions and in different parts of the state, no doubt those interested in importing and trying new species will not only get a lot of good experience but may also enrich our palm flora to some extent.

Palms of the Oregon Coast

ROBERT L. BISHOP

(Oregon, or some part of it, lies in the same latitude with upstate New York, Vermont and southern Maine.)

My accidental discovery of a twenty-foot fan palm growing at the entrance of a suburban Portland apartment building was what sparked my interest in the subject of palms. I reasoned that if one palm had withstood the rigors of our northerly climate surely others might be found, especially along the milder coastal sections of our state. "There are palm trees growing in Oregon," was a remark I subsequently made to many of my acquaintances and was usually greeted in return with a skeptical raise of the eyebrows. I could hardly blame them for their attitude, for most Oregonians have been thoroughly indoctrinated by the California Chamber of Commerce into believing that they reside just two shades from the North Pole.

All in all Portland is an unlikely place for palms. In two years I have only been able to locate one other palm. This was a small two-foot specimen which succumbed to a very severe freeze a year ago; however, according to the owner it had survived two winters at least, and possibly more. It is still conceivable that there may be others growing in some of the older residential areas of this city of 400,000 population.

Since my initial discovery and interest two years ago I have been able to locate perhaps a dozen or so mature palms along Oregon's mild coastal strip. These and the one in Portland can probably be relegated to one genus surely, that of *Trachycarpus*. And possibly *Chamaerops*, with *Washingtonia* a doubtful third.

I should explain before going further that the State of Oregon enjoys three or even four distinct climates, beginning on the coast with an extremely mild marine climate. Portland and the Willamette Valley in the interior has greater temperature extremes than the immediate coast, and experiences a true combination of the marine of the coast and the continental climate, which prevails east of the Cascade Range.

A fourth might be described as comprising a small mountain ringed valley in southwestern Oregon, in which are situated the towns of Grant's Pass and Medford. Here also is the small historic town of Jacksonville, an early-days gold mining center and the site of the oldest living palm tree in Oregon. This tree was planted in 1871 by the son of Peter Britt, pioneer photographer and

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Photo by the Author

Palms on the property of Mrs. Marie L. Smith of Coos Bay, Oregon.

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amateur horticulturist. I have not as yet visited this region, but according to Mary Hanley of the Southern Oregon Historical Society there are a number of other palms in this community. This is a locality of very warm summers, with temperatures ranging to 90° F. and better daily and quite dry in comparison with the coast. Winters are somewhat cooler than either the coast or the Willamette Valley in the north.

Winter brings the heaviest rainfall throughout the entire state and may range from 160 inches at the crest of the Coast Range to 10 inches annually on the high deserts of the southeastern corner.

The coastal strip or plain with which I am here concerned is at sea level elevation, quite narrow, being from one to ten miles in width and extends from the California border to the Columbia River 295 miles north. The southern section from Coos Bay south is the mildest part of the whole state, while north of Coos Bay the climate tends to be cooler, though not markedly so. The Coos Bay area mean temperatures range from a January mean of 45° F. to an August mean of 60° F. It is never hot here in summer, and on the whole a remarkably even temperature prevails the year around. The nearly complete absence of snow and killing frosts makes it comparable in this respect with the Gulf Coast. The all-time low temperature recorded at North Bend on Coos Bay was 17° F. The usual low when below freezing is seldom greater than 28° F. and generally not of a prolonged duration.

This last summer (1956) I began a rather hurried search. With only three days to look for palms I headed for the coast. I began at the town of Taft about 100 miles southwest of Portland. I hadn't been on the road long, about five miles, when I spotted a pair of fan palms about five feet tall growing in a grove of Cordylines. My find was a pleasant surprise to me and absolute amazement to my wife who had long

regarded the Portland palm as a freak. I could have hardly missed these, for on the highway was a vacated building with the cryptic words "Palm Cafe" emblazoned on its sign board, followed by "Dine among the Palms." This seemingly had become a hard fact for the natives to swallow judging from the deserted air of the property. Next came a long stretch of road devoid of both people and palms.

At Waldport I was lucky enough to find another small palm owned by a Mrs. Lee Doty who was able to give me more information than anyone I have contacted before or since. This palm while only six feet tall is thirty years old, which may be due to species characteristics or that Waldport may lie in a cooler spot climatically than other coastal points. She stated that in the last ten years it had probably grown a foot in height, while the trunk diameter remained about eight inches. It was started from seed and had been transplanted about ten years ago with great difficulty due to the tremendous root system. The soil here is very sandy, while the whole locale suggests a continual dampness.

Eighty miles south of Waldport lie the twin cities of North Bend and Coos Bay, and here I found the bonanza I had been looking for. Being the largest and one of the oldest population centers on the coast it also has the largest and oldest palms. At Shore Acres State Park directly west of Coos Bay is what I believe at present to be the finest single stand of palms in Oregon. They have never been publicized and consequently are practically unknown even locally, or at least the local population seems blithely unaware of their presence. This park was once a millionaire's estate and consists of extensive gardens situated on a cliff facing the ocean. Incidentally Cordylines abound in this area, as well as in other coastal towns; here they are most numerous outnumbering the true palms twenty to one. Most of the coastal

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Photo by the Author

Thirty-year-old palm belonging to Mrs. Lee Doty of Waldport, Oregon.

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residents when asked about palms erroneously regard these interesting plants as palms.

All of the palms, both in the park and in the twin cities are fairly tall, towering twenty to thirty feet and more. To my untrained eye they seem to be of the genus *Trachycarpus*, but rather than commit myself to a likely error I will leave the final determination to the experts. I must confess that at this point I am like a man trying to describe a cow who has never seen a cow before. All are fan palms with great semicircular leaves of a four or five foot spread. The trunks are covered with a dark brown hairlike fiber and the stubs of the fallen leaf stalks. On some, but not all, the trunks taper sharply to the ground; that is, smaller at the ground level than at the top. The fruit is small beanlike but seldom ripens, and the trees usually cast the fruit to the ground while it is still undeveloped and green. This is probably due to the lack of summer heat, since it rarely goes above 75° F. at North Bend.

I think the most regrettable thing about these palms is the lack of knowledge and interest in them, though most of the owners are rather proud of their particular specimens. Aside from this there is little interest in perpetuating or extending the existing plantings with young stock. I would say that nearly all of these palms are from 30 to 60 years old or more, yet never is a young tree seen. Why no others have been planted

is something of a mystery. Certainly the climate is no more severe than it was 50 years ago, so perhaps they merely went out of style as the monkey puzzle tree did.

To speculate on the possibilities of other palm genera which might be introduced to this region, is of course endlessly fascinating in scope. Probably some of the native scrub palms of the southeastern states will prove adaptable, such as *Serenoa repens*, *Rhapidophyllum hystrix*, *Sabal minor* or even the *Sabal Palmetto*. I noted one clump of an unknown scrub palm which was spreading out in a very vigorous manner at Shore Acres State Park.

The greatest factors against successful introduction are the wet winters, low light-intensities, and cool year-round temperatures. The latitude extending from 42° to 46° North is favorable in comparison with certain gardens in the south of England where palms (*Trachycarpus Fortunei* and *Phoenix canariensis*) have been successfully grown at latitudes of 50° N. and more. The soil of the Oregon coast is generally of an excellent quality, composed mainly of decomposed forest vegetation, and decaying limonitic basalts, decidedly acid with no limestone or alkali present.

We will not, of course, ever enjoy the sight of swaying Coconut palms or other strictly tropicals, but a little hard-headed experimenting should pay off. To those who like their experimenting tough, this is the place.

"When next in Miami," writes Mrs. Theodore C. Buhler, "take advantage of even a spare hour or two to visit one of the area's smaller, older and at present little-known horticultural collections: the Miami City Cemetery, located between North Miami Avenue and N. E. 2nd Avenue at 18th Street. The plantings at this cemetery once attracted many out-of-town horticulturists and are still of much interest. Many unusual palms, trees and shrubs were planted there by the sexton, Alek Korsakoff, in the twenties and early thirties. They are now mature and Alek is always willing to talk about his plants, will help collect seeds if and when available, and has exact records of the plants. One may speak to Alek beforehand by calling, between 8 and 3:30, the City of Miami switchboard, then asking for the City Cemetery."