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PALM BRIEFS

My Palms

Teddie Buhler has asked me to write about my palms. I am happy to live with them. In 1941, when my husband and I bought the four-acre high pine land in Kendall, south of Miami, Florida for a fruit farm we started with a mango grove and about 30 varieties of tropical fruits (important, as we are vegetarians). We also planted flowering trees and palms.

We lined the entrance road with coconut palms (*Cocos nucifera*), made a rondel with 'Malayan Dwarf' and 'Makapuno' coconuts, the latter with jellylike meat. One-half acre we left natural, with pines, palmettos, and coral rock, for protection and firewood. In January-February 1977 we surely needed firewood. Two frost nights with 25 and 30 degrees F did a lot of damage to our palms. Long icicles sparkled in the morning sun where the sprinklers had been running all night.

It was a sad sight, as we walked through the garden at that time. The fishtail palm (*Caryota urens*) disappeared, though *C. mitis* had some life. All the taller palms, such as *Roystonea regia*, *Washingtonia*, *Arecastrum roman-zoffianum* (*Cocos plumosa*), *Veitchia merrillii* and *V. winin*, *Neodypsis*, *Livistona*, *Coccothrinax*, *Dictyosperma*, *Cryosophila nana*, *Hyophorbe (Mascarena)*, *Balaka*, *Phoenix reclinata*, *P. roebelenii*,

Chrysalidocarpus lutescens, lost some leaves. The oil palm, *Elaeis guineensis*, is still struggling for life. All the coconuts came through except two.

I felt really sorry at losing the female *Salacca*. I had brought two seeds from Bogor, Java, collected on my world tour with The Palm Society in 1968. The male survived, but is lonesome.

When I look back on our start in 1943 I can say that we moved "to the land." High pine land is healthy to live on, but it is hard work to get something growing in white sand and limestone rock. A water system was the first thing we needed, then humus from seaweed, and organic fertilizer. That did it.

The first Christmas after we had electricity Alf, my husband, climbed a tall pine and put light bulbs among the twigs. Later we planted a cedar in the parking area and lighted it. It is now a marvelous tree as tall as our pines.

Since Alf's death in 1961 I take care of our farm and the palms with two faithful helpers. On November 18th, 1978, at The Palm Society meeting at the A. R. Jennings estate, we saw the largest private palm collection. In rich natural soil palms grow happily to the sky, while ours struggle so hard to live, even with much attention and water. They are still a wonder to me in their majesty and beauty.

ELSE MARGRAFF, age 81
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