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PALM BRIEF

Ptychosperma elegans regenerating in Southern California

In the Spring of 1970, I planted a one gallon sized plant of *Ptychosperma elegans*. In those days, we had our usual ten year cycle of freezes. For the last four or five years, we have been having them every year. Apparently 1970 was a good year, because the palm got off to a good start, and had grown well from the very beginning. I also planted close by, a plant of *Chrysalidocarpus madagascariensis* var. *lucubensis*, which initially grew much more slowly. I was thrilled when my *Ptychosperma* got to the point when a trunk began to form. Hey, this was a rare palm in those days for California. As a matter of fact, the *Ptychosperma* had two and a half feet of trunk, while the *Chrysalidocarpus* had not yet formed even an inch. Three years ago, the *Ptychosperma* developed an inflorescence and when seed formed, I gathered them up in an effort to germinate them. Not a single one sprouted. The following year, seed formed again, and I had intended to sprout them, but neglected to do so, and they all fell to the ground. I intended to gather some to try to germinate them, but again neglected to do so. About a year and a half ago or so, in March, after a winter freeze, I happened to be working in the garden, when I noticed hundreds of

small seedlings sprouting in the ground under the *Ptychosperma elegans*. I could hardly believe it, especially after a freeze. I gently dug many of them and potted them into liners. Last January, the seeds ripened again, and this time I collected and planted them into an appropriate mix. Two months later, they sprouted and now I have hundreds of small seedlings. There are still small seedlings growing in the ground and to my knowledge, this is the first time this particular palm has regenerated in a garden in Southern California. Of course, I don't claim that one could throw seed on a vacant lot or parcel of ground and they would germinate, as would be expected of *Washingtonia robusta* or *Phoenix canariensis*, but I think with a reasonable amount of garden moisture they might. I would like to think that my *Ptychosperma elegans* would be a little more hardy for California than those grown from seed that came from the tropics. Perhaps it can be tested some day. By the way, the *Chrysalidocarpus madagascariensis* var. *lucubensis*, now has a taller, wider trunk, and is taller overall than the *Ptychosperma elegans*, but it has not yet flowered. I am patiently waiting for that day to come.

RALPH VELEZ
15461 Devonshire Circle
Westminster, CA 92683