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1996 I.P.S. Biennial Private Garden Tours

DON TOLLEFSON

599 California Ave., Venice, CA
90291

If you live in a temperate climate, and you have a desire to learn about growing the many beautiful, exotic palms that can be grown in your area, then don't miss the private garden tours at the 1996 California Biennial. California is one of the world's leaders in the cultivation of temperate climate grown palms, and there are many California gardens that are now among the best in the world. It's a sophisticated skill to grow tropical palms in a temperate climate, but once you obtain the basic know how it's surprisingly easy, and you'll be amazed with how lush and tropical a garden you can develop.

A test of my ability to develop a palm collection in a temperate climate came with a visit from friend and fellow I.P.S. member, Garrin Fullington, a couple of years ago. I took Garrin to one of my gardens in Venice, California and showed him an extensive assortment of tropical and temperate climate palms. It was at the end of winter and the daytime temperatures were in the 40s. I thought my garden looked excellent, but I didn't know how Garrin would react, being from the Hilo area of Hawaii, with annual rainfall of over 200 inches, and temperatures that had never fallen below 60 degrees.

At the end of the tour, Garrin said, "Your garden looks great! I'm impressed with the palms that you can grow, and I'm even more impressed with how good they look." Garrin tends to be understated, so I was exhilarated with his compliment. "I can't take all the credit," I explained, "I've done the Southern California Palm Journal Close Ups (interviews) for the past few years, and I've learned how to grow these palms in a temperate climate from the people I've interviewed. You might say I've learned from the best, and I'm grateful for their interviews."

Now the opportunity to see some of these gardens is near. The August schedule for the 1996 International Palm Society Biennial in California includes four private gardens and the ability to

see first hand some of the many exotic and beautiful palms that can easily be grown in a temperate climate. There is no substitute to learning from experienced growers, and seeing their mature collections. These gardens and these growers are among the best anywhere. The four gardens are those of Lois Rossten, Ralph Velez, Pauleen Sullivan, and Louis Hooper. What follows is a summary of each garden and the unique growing techniques of each grower.

Lois Rossten emphasizes the importance of a greenhouse, and the ease with which you can grow beautiful, lush palms once you have a basic concept of growing tropical palms in a temperate climate. Lois has a small greenhouse, which is shaded from sunlight due to the canopy formed by her mature palms. She keeps the temperature warm during the winter months with a natural gas heater. The temperature seldom exceeds 80°, or drops below 60°. Lois finds that most small palms will not grow well in a temperate climate without winter protection and greenhouse-induced size. She leaves the palms in the greenhouse until they are ready to move from a four inch into a one gallon container at which time she places them outdoors to harden off. Louis likes to bring the palms out of the greenhouse in the spring after the nighttime temperatures stabilize at or above the high 50s. She then allows the palms to grow to a large one gallon size outdoors and plants them in the ground during the spring and summer months as a one gallon, digging a hole just large enough for the palm to fit into.

Lois' philosophy is basically to plant the palm and wait. Nothing happens at first. Nothing happens next. Nothing happens after a year. Nothing happens after two years. And just when it seems that the plant is going to remain a runt forever it begins to grow and it continues to grow becoming a large fast-growing palm. Her system is simplistic and highly successful, but it does require more patience than most other systems.

Lois has a fabulous palm collection with over 150 species on her standard city lot. Included in her collection of specimen palms are *Veitchia joannis*, *Veitchia arecina*, *Dictyosperma album*, *Wallichia disticha*, *Carpentaria acuminata*, *Roystonea regia*, and *Parajubea cocoides*.

Ralph Velez stresses the importance of a greenhouse, and the ultimate size and time to plant most palms outdoors. Ralph has two greenhouses, and a palm growing career, which has included some form of greenhouse from the beginning. Ralph's lower greenhouse is his cool greenhouse in which he grows many greenhouse-only palms. His upper greenhouse is the warm one in which he grows his seedlings to planting size. Ralph installed his upper greenhouse because the sunlight to his lower greenhouse became blocked from his mature palms.

Ralph feels that it's not productive to attempt to grow small tropical palms without the benefit of greenhouse heat. They simply will not grow satisfactorily, and a normally two-year effort can turn into a ten- or twelve-year odyssey, with the probable loss of the palm before it obtains planting size.

Ralph prefers to grow the palms to a five gallon size in the greenhouse. He notices the palms obtain a large five gallon size much more quickly in a greenhouse than outdoors and feels that a rapidly grown greenhouse palm is far more suitable for temperate climate adaptation than a slow outdoor-grown palm. Ralph places the palms outdoors in the spring when the nighttime temperatures remain in the high 50s or above, and plants them in the ground from late spring to late summer. Ralph has discovered that there is a perfect size for planting palms and that is from a large five gallon to a small seven gallon. He particularly avoids planting larger greenhouse-grown palms that have developed trunk because they often suffer "post greenhouse shrink," from which they can never recover.

Ralph's is probably the most extensive small private collection anywhere. On a standard corner lot, Ralph has over 200 species, and he has palms growing throughout his neighborhood. Some of his most significant mature palms are *Roystonea regia*, *Roystonea oleracea*, *Roystonea borinquena*, *Marojejya darianii*, *Prestoea montana*, *Catoblastus praemorsus*, *Arenga pinnata*, *Dypsis madagascariensis*, *Rhopalostylis baueri*, and *Rhopalostylis sapida*.

Pauleen Sullivan emphasizes the importance of a small greenhouse "slider" and her indoor heated poolroom. Pauleen calls her small greenhouse slider her "hot house," which consists of sliding patio doors in which she raises the small palms, and a heated poolroom into which she moves the palms after they reach a one gallon or larger size. Pauleen prefers to plant the palms outdoors in the ground after they obtain a three to five gallon size, although she has planted many at smaller sizes. She believes that most palms do best with an abundant supply of water. Her theory is that you can't overwater a palm, which makes sense because in habitat, most palms come from areas of 100 to 300 inches of annual rainfall. Pauleen even allows some of her palms to sit in an inch or so of water, and she has developed a system of swirling out the old water so that fresh, oxygenated water is provided to the palms each time she waters.

Pauleen's collection includes some species that no one else has been able to grow, so be certain to make a note to see them. Most significantly, Pauleen has *Ceroxylon ventricosa*. It has about 18 feet of trunk with upright fronds extending shaving brush style up to about 33 feet tall overall. It's easy to miss this tall plant because at Pauleen's garden your eyes are constantly drawn toward the many beautiful shorter palms. Nowhere else in the northern hemisphere can such a large and majestic *Ceroxylon* be found except at one of Pauleen's other gardens, which is not on the tour. Pauleen planted her *Ceroxylon* in the ground in its present location as a two-leaf seedling! Also of significance is a *Chrysalidocarpus decipiens*, *Chambeyronia macrocarpa*, *Kentiopsis oliviformis*, *Hedyscepe canterburyana*, *Dypsis leptocheilos*, *Ravenia monticola*, *Ceroxylon hexandrum*, *Basselinia favierii*, *Normanbya normanbyi*, *Lepidorrhachis mooreana*, *Ptychococcus elatum*, *Pinanga javana*, and many other mature specimens.

Louis Hooper emphasizes the importance of a greenhouse, and he has developed an excellent system for potting up the palms. Louis has discovered that the palms just can't seem to survive outdoors in California unless they have obtained three or four leaves in the greenhouse. Louis' potting system is very effective. He starts with a rose pot, and goes from that size to a four inch, to a gallon, to a five gallon, potting up the palms after they become a large plant with a solid, substantially rootbound rootball. He moves the palms

out of the greenhouse as a large one gallon, potting them into a five gallon size and growing them under 70% shade cloth until they reach a good size, at which time he plants them outdoors in the ground. Louis likes to prop open his greenhouse door in the summer, and expresses great appreciation for the heat that he enjoys at his La Habra, California growing area.

Louis has a splendid outdoor palm collection, which includes a *Roystonea regia*, *Ravenea madagascariensis*, *Ravenea rivularis*, *Pseudophoenix sargentii*, *Licuala ramsayi*, *Licuala peltata*, and several other beautiful palms, including a splendid collection of *Chamaeodorea*.

Growing exotic tropical palms in a temperate climate involves obtaining the basic knowledge necessary to do it. At past biennials I've met many members from areas throughout the world that should be capable of producing gardens similar to those of Southern California. People from the southeastern United States, South Africa, South Australia, New Zealand, Southern Europe, and

Israel for instance that could have palm collections equal to or better than those in California, but when they inform me of what they are growing, their collections are lacking compared to what they could be growing if only they were aware of what could be grown, and could obtain it. Most often they state that their climate is too cold to grow what can be grown in California, but the true cut off point should be cold temperature and not a psychological one.

Most California gardens have little or no frost or freezing temperatures, and some have none at all so if your area fits this description, there is no reason why you can't grow the same palms, except for a lack of knowledge and experience which you can obtain at the Biennial. Come to the Biennial. Plan to visit the four private gardens on the Biennial tour. Take notes. Take pictures. Ask questions. Ask more questions. And go home prepared to develop a fabulous temperate climate palm collection of your own.

CHAPTER NEWS AND EVENTS *(Continued from p. 124)*

for the group, which will affiliate with the IPS as a chapter.

News from the South Florida Chapter of the IPS

The South Florida Chapter met on March 30 for a field trip/work party at the Miami Metro Zoo. The chapter's palm collection at the zoo was in need of spring maintenance. Fertilizing, mulching, and trimming were the orders of the day.

The group held a general meeting at Fairchild Tropical Garden on Tuesday, April 23. The guest speaker was a landscape architect who discussed general design, texture, planning, and species selection. Members brought donated palms for auction afterwards.

News from the Palm Beach Chapter

The Palm Beach Palm and Cycad Society held a general meeting at Mounts Botanical Garden on May 1, 1996. The meeting featured De Armand Hull sharing the experience of his recent trip to

China. A plant auction followed the presentation.

In keeping with the far eastern theme, Chuck Hubbuch spoke to the group about palms of Thailand at the June 5 general meeting. Chuck is the Director of Curators at Fairchild Tropical Gardens and his presentations are always interesting and insightful. The traditional plant auction followed the general meeting.

The chapter continued its work at the Norton Sculpture Garden during a May 18 work day. This endeavor was organized as a planting event and the volunteers were treated to lunch.

Pacific Northwest Chapter News

The Pacific Northwest Palm and Exotic Plant Society (PNWP&EPS) held its annual sale at Van Dusen Botanical Garden on Palm Sunday, March 21. The sale was open to the public for the first time and was a resounding success, producing about \$600 in net profit for the club.

Many rare plants were sold by ten different vendors, and sales were almost twice that of last year. In addition to the sales, three new members joined the club.