

2014 IPS Biennial: South Florida

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1. The needle palm in Highlands Hammock State Park.

Plans are well underway for an exciting and palm-filled 2014 IPS Biennial in South Florida, USA. The event will showcase palms in private and public gardens, as well as palms in the wild.

The last Biennial in South Florida was in 1992, just weeks after Hurricane Andrew, one of the most devastating and destructive hurricanes ever to hit the region. Palm collections, such as Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, nurseries

and palm habitats were devastated. Now, some 22 years later, the recovery is nothing short of astonishing. The palms are back and look better than ever, so pack your bags and prepare to see some amazing palms!

The Biennial will begin in Miami on Saturday, May 24, 2014. This is a public holiday weekend in the USA (Memorial Day), so the airport is likely to be busier than normal. Attendees are advised to reserve their flights early. Banks and many other businesses will be closed. Miami in late May is usually sunny and warm but not oppressively humid and hot, so the Biennial participants should expect fine weather. The hurricane season does not officially begin until June, so there is little chance of history repeating.

Members of the IPS Board of Directors will meet during the first day. Any IPS members wishing to observe the meeting may attend (contact IPS President Leland Lai for meeting details). Biennial attendees will meet in the evening for the kick-off banquet at the host hotel and an after-dinner presentation by Dr. Patrick Griffith, the director of the Montgomery Botanical Center. An early bedtime is in order, as the following day will be a long one.

Day Two (Sunday, May 25) will see the attendees on buses traveling to palms in habitat at Highlands Hammock State Park. This park, about 3 hours by bus, from Miami has the southern-most populations of *Rhapidophyllum*

hystrix (Fig. 1) and *Sabal minor*, as well as some of the most beautiful specimens of *Sabal palmetto* to be seen anywhere in the state. After visiting the park, attendees will visit Archbold Biological Station, a working scientific research station in the sand pine scrub habitat of Florida. This unique habitat is home to the endemic *Sabal etonia*, a palm seldom seen by visitors to Florida, as well as many other plants and animals specially adapted to the deep, infertile sand and periodic fires. The day will end with a barbecue at Searle Brothers Nursery, a well-known palm nursery in Broward County.

Day Three (Monday, May 26) features tours of two iconic palm collections in Miami. Participants will spend the morning at Pinecrest Gardens, the former site of the venerable Parrot Jungle. The performing parrots are gone, but the palm collections, originally begun by one of the IPS founders, Nat De Leon, and continued in recent years by Craig Morell, are mature and beautiful. The lush plantings, water features and serpentine pathways are cool and shady, so visitors will enjoy exploring for palms. Be sure to see the *Pholidocarpus macrocarpus*, grown from seed sent to Nat De Leon by Hal Moore in 1966.

2. A small portion of the palm collection at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden.





3. A collection of squat *Hyophorbe* and slender *Gaussia* species at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden.



4. *Acoelorrhaphe wrightii* in Everglades National Park. Photo by Ray Hernandez.

A few minutes away is Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, where participants will spend the rest of the day. Lunch will be provided in the Garden, and visitors will be able to explore at their leisure one of the epicenters of palm horticulture. The Garden, founded in 1938, is a mecca for palm enthusiasts, but like any garden, it is always changing and always growing. Even if you have visited FTBG before, you are sure to see something new, unexpected or photogenic. If you have not visited FTBG before, prepare yourself for a mind-blowing experience. There are exceptional palms and gorgeous vistas throughout the Garden (Figs. 2 & 3). IPS participants will stay after hours to enjoy cocktails as the sun sets, followed by an elegant banquet and an illustrated presentation by FTBG Director, Dr. Carl E. Lewis.

Day Four (Tuesday, May 27) will see the IPS group checking out of our Miami hotel and beginning a bus tour to Key West. The first destination will be Everglades National Park, with stops in Mahogany Hammock and Royal Palm Hammock to see *Acoelorrhaphe wrightii* (Fig. 4) and *Roystonea regia*. These palms are familiar in cultivation, but to see them growing in the wild is an unforgettable experience. The

buses will continue south making two more stops. The first set of busses will stop at Bahia Honda State Park to see a population of unusually tall *Coccothrinax argentata* (Fig. 5). If you have seen *C. argentata* on the mainland, where it is no more than chest-high, the towering specimens in Bahia Honda will be a revelation. The other set of buses will visit Villa Paradiso, the private garden of local palm aficionado Franco D'Ascanio, in the middle Keys. Not ordinarily open to tours, this garden features an exceptional collection of palms doing very nicely next to the salt water. On the return trip, on Thursday, the buses will switch, so every bus will visit every destination. All of the buses will arrive in Key West just in time for dinner.

Day Five (Wednesday, May 28) is a free day, in which IPS attendees can relax at the hotel, sight-see around the island or take part in any number of other activities (fishing, snorkeling, shopping, museums, etc.). Optional tours can be arranged at the hotel, or visitors can set out on their own.

On Day Six (Thursday, May 29), the IPS group will board the buses for the return trip north,

5. *Coccothrinax argentata* in Bahia Honda State Park. Photo by Ray Hernandez.





6. Some of Montgomery Botanical Center's palm collection. Photo courtesy Montgomery Botanical Center.

stopping at the sites from Tuesday, as well as two additional private gardens where palms and other tropical plants are used throughout the landscape. These professionally designed gardens, like the previous one, are not normally open to visitors, so Biennial attendees will have a rare glimpse of two stunning private gardens. Punta Roquena is a 4.5-hectare (11-acre) estate originally developed by Bernie C. Papy, a legendary Keys politician. It has gone through several transformations since but maintains a large palm collection on a point of land jutting out into the Atlantic. Bait Shack is a 2-hectare (5-acre) garden owned by an avid fisherman that, while much younger than Punta Roquena, contains many unusual and mature palm species. Once back in Miami, the group will meet for dinner at a local restaurant, followed by a presentation on the palms of Cuba by the globe-trotting, island-hopping Paul Craft.

Day Seven (Friday, May 30) is the last full day of Biennial activities. The day will begin by a tour of a private botanical garden just minutes away from the hotel. The garden's creator and owner, Dr. Jeff Block, is a palm enthusiast (and

bromeliad enthusiast and begonia enthusiast...), who has created a remarkable garden in suburban Miami. He attributes much of his success to the use of deionized water. The proof, it would seem, is in the lush, vigorous growth of palms and other tender tropicals.

The next stop on the itinerary is Montgomery Botanical Center (Fig. 6), where attendees will enjoy a picnic lunch on the lawn with scenic views of the garden. MBC staff will be on hand to give guided tours of this large botanical garden's exceptional collection of palms, cycads and tropical conifers. The mature specimens of *Hemithrinax ekmaniana* and *Nypa fruticans* should be on everyone's must-see list! After a full day of palm-viewing, attendees will return to the hotel for the farewell banquet.

Not to be missed, the South Florida Biennial promises to be a memorable event, a chance to see some of the finest palm collections in the area, in the company of IPS members from all over the world. Bring your camera. Bring your sunglasses. We shall supply great palms, fascinating presentations, delicious food and outstanding camaraderie.