



THE INTERNATIONAL PALM SOCIETY

June 2021

NEWSLETTER

Sixty-Five Years of the International Palm Society

This continuing series illuminates the synergy between palm botanists and our mission of research, education, and conservation. Scientists and devoted enthusiasts are invited to share their rich experiences. In this issue, Donald Hodel from the University of California shares his story.

My Half Century with Palms

Donald R. Hodel

I was smitten with palms in early 1971 when James L. Degen, my undergraduate college professor at California State Polytechnic University at Pomona, introduced them to me during a plant materials course. He recognized and fostered my interest in this special group of plants, took me to meetings of the Palm Society of Southern California (a chapter of the IPS), and introduced me to local nurseries and personages who grew palms. He also encouraged me to join the IPS, which, mostly through its marvelous journal *PALMS* (then known as *Principes*), opened a whole new world to me of amazing and intriguing palms.

In June 1974, as a reward for attaining my undergraduate degree, I attended the IPS Biennial Meeting in Miami, Florida where I met many of the most famous palm people of that era, including Dent Smith, Hal Moore, Lucita Waite, Teddie Buhler, Ken Foster, Nat de Leon, and Joe and Pauleen Sullivan, among many others; visited many extraordinary palm gardens; listened to fascinating presentations; and admired countless, spectacular palms, most of which were new to me. I even attended the famous IPS Post-Biennial trip to Colombia, where we experienced a wealth of palms in perhaps the most palm-rich place in the world.

Then I was off to the University of Hawaii for my graduate degree (studying palms, of course), which Hal Moore had encouraged me to pursue. In Hawaii, I began my studies of *Pritchardia*, culminating many years later (2007) in a special supplement to *PALMS*, which reviewed this extraordinarily distributed, Pacific-island genus of fan palms. The IPS supported my work in *Pritchardia*, and *PALMS*, with its supportive and talented editors, John Dransfield and Scott Zona, was the perfect venue to publish the results of my work, which included several new species and resolved other taxonomic and nomenclatural problems in the genus.

I had returned to California in 1980 and, after several years working in the nursery industry, I began a 36-year career with the University of California, where I continued my work in palm taxonomy and began studies in palm horticulture. Among the most significant palm work in my career were my studies of the large, neotropical genus *Chamaedorea*. The IPS supported my research in *Chamaedorea*, including field work in Mexico and Central America, and in *PALMS* published numerous articles of mine nam-

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ing new species and addressing taxonomic problems in the genus. In 1992, the IPS published the culmination of my work, the monographic book *Chamaedorea Palms*. The IPS also published several of my articles on palm horticulture, including a 2013 collection of articles comprising one entire issue of PALMS. Over the years the IPS has published 76 of my articles in PALMS and one book.



Chamaedorea tenerrima is one of the most striking and remarkable species in the genus. The pinnae increase in size toward the leaf tip. The terminal pair is broadly flared while the other, smaller ones are reflexed backwards. This species grows in wet mountain forest and cloud forest in Guatemala.

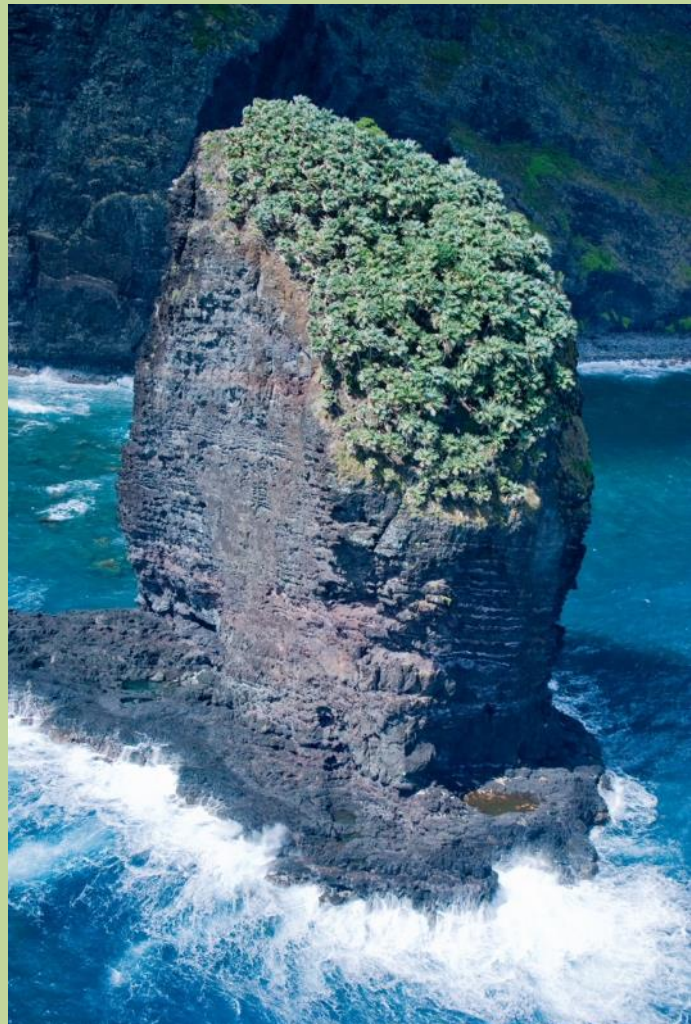
Thus, the IPS has played a dominant role in my more than half century of growing and studying palms. Through its journal and various social media platforms, grants and other financial support, international and regional meetings, local chapters, and the various member personalities, from growers and collectors to the world's leading researchers, the IPS has led the way in developing information about how to grow, identify, understand, and conserve these most favorite plants.

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Looking at the effects of leaf removal and tie up on transplanted palms. Here it is, freshly dug in all its naked glory, waiting to have leaves removed and/or tied up prior to transplanting. The temperature was 46° C (115°F) on this late June day in the California desert.

The Hawaiian *Pritchardia hillebrandii* now survives only on two rock islets of the northern coast of Molokai. Here it is on Huelo, the larger and more famous of the two, densely covering the top like a crew-cut on a head of hair, nearly to the exclusion of all other vegetation. The sea cliffs of Molokai are visible in the background; the species once inhabited these but was decimated by pigs, goats, and rats, which haven't yet made it out to Huelo.



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The most spectacular setting I have seen in my half century of palms has to be these *Pritchardia thurstonii* on mushroom-shaped, karst-limestone islets in the Fulanga Lagoon in the Southern Lau Group, Fiji. I had to hire a helicopter to fly me to see these. We were unable to land, and I took the photo hanging out of the chopper's open door. Read about this 2017 adventure at <https://ucanr.edu/sites/HodelPalmsTrees/files/268034.pdf>



Celebrate 65!

Your participation in the 65th anniversary campaign will allow the IPS many more years of research, education, and conservation. Fundraising for this endeavor will close on September 1, 2021. And then we can look forward to our 70th anniversary in 2026.

The Dent Smith Founder's Society*

Gold: \$10,000

Silver: \$5000

Bronze: \$1000

*All Founder's Society level contributors will be recognized in the December, 2021 PALMS journal.

Other Donation levels: \$500, \$250, \$100, \$50, \$25 or \$10.

The International Palm Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, Federal Tax I.D. 59-0829820 All or a portion of this gift may be tax deductible, less any goods or services received. Consult with your tax advisor regarding deductibility.

The International Palm Society's 65th Anniversary Fundraising Campaign

Your participation will ensure many more years of palm related research, education and conservation. Please help the IPS by donating today!



[CLICK TO DONATE](#)

New Lifetime Member

On behalf of our 100% volunteer Board of Directors, I would like to recognize and thank our newest lifetime member of the IPS:

Mark Cox

Our mission to preserve palms in habitat requires like-minded plant conservationists like you! Please consider supporting our society by encouraging new memberships with fellow palm and tropical plant enthusiasts.



PIMBY (Palms In My Back Yard): Indiana(?) by Andy Hurwitz

I think we all would agree, Indianapolis is not the most exotic locale for palm trees. Nonetheless the “Circle City” is where I spent my boyhood, and the Garfield Park Conservatory was my only opportunity for viewing tropical plants. So, it was my true first PIMBY.

The first conservatory on site was built in 1916. This wooden structure, which included a dedicated palm house, deteriorated over time. A near 1000 m² welded aluminum and glass building, in the Art Deco style, replaced it in 1955. Remarkably, this was the first aluminum constructed building in the United States.

On my recent visit, several palm genera were represented including: *Dypsis*, *Chamaedorea*, *Caryota*, *Bismarckia*, *Astrocaryum*, *Coccothrinax*, and *Rhapis*. As well as cycads, bromeliads, orchids, and a splendid, vivid turquoise jade vine (*Strogylodon macrobotrys*).

The Garfield Park Conservatory, Indianapolis, Indiana.



PIMBY: Indiana(?)



Astrocaryum mexicanum

Coccothrinax crinita



PIMBY: Indiana(?)



Strongylodon macrobotrys