The Journal of The European Palm Society - No. 50

Chamaerops

50

Contents

Articles:

Standards:

Cover: Espeletia sp. on Volcan Chiles around 4000 m asl., northern Ecuador. See article on page 9.
Photo: Tobias W. Spanner

Chamaerops is the quarterly journal of The European Palm Society. The European Palm Society (EPS) is affiliated to the International Palm Society and was founded in 1991. The EPS is a nonprofit organization dedicated to sharing information about palms and other exotic plants across the continent of Europe. The main goal of the EPS is to communicate with other enthusiasts through Chamaerops, the EPS website, or personally at Society meetings, in order to share ideas and knowledge of the successful cultivation of exotic plants. Above all, the EPS and Chamaerops are run by members, for members.
Issue no. 50, published in January 2005

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Editorial

We have just arrived at Chamaerops issue number 50. A nice round number, and the fact that we have been going for over 12 years now is not a bad record, but I always feel we could be doing better. With the interest in exotic plants booming as it has over the last few years, our membership should really be increasing. It might be time to find out where members think the EPS should be heading in the future. I have adapted for our purposes a small questionnaire recently used for the International Palm Society to get a better overview over our membership. I hope many of you will participate. Simply photocopy this page, complete and mail it to the address below or scan and e-mail to mail@palmsociety.org.

1. When it comes to palms, do you have a professional interest or are you a hobbyist?

o Professional interest
o Hobbyist

2. For how many years have you been an EPS member?

o 1-2
o 3-5
o 6 or more

3. How likely are you to renew your EPS membership for 2005?

o Very likely
o Somewhat likely
o Not likely
o Don't know

4. Which phrase best describes your interaction with the EPS journal Chamaerops?

o I read almost every article
o I read some articles
o I just look at the pictures
o I rarely look at it at all

5. Approximately how often do you visit the EPS website?

o Almost every day
o 1 - 3 times each week
o 1 - 3 times each month
o A few times per year but less than once per month.
o I have internet access but rarely visit the site.
o I do not have internet access.

6. How many other palm societies are you a member of?

o Just the EPS
o The EPS and one other palm society
o The EPS and several other palm societies

7. What other activities would you like the EPS to organize?

o European meetings and plant trips
o Local meetings and tours of gardens
o Books on palms published by the EPS
o More activities on the EPS website
o I am happy with just the journal Chamaerops.

9. What solutions could you envision to fight our constant shortage of articles for Chamaerops?

o Pay contributors
o Pay for articles by professionals
o Reprint more articles from other journals
o Reward contributors with free memberships
o your suggestion ……..

9. What is your age?

o Under 30
o 30-39
o 40-49
o 50-59
o 60 or older

Please mail the completed questionnaire to: The European Palm Society, c/o Tobias W. Spanner, Tizianstrasse 44, 80638 Muenchen, Germany.

The Cultivation of Phoenix dactylifera in Modern Israel

By Reuven Zasler, Karmiel, Central Galilee, Israel

The edible date (or, at least, the honey derived from it is edible) is one of the seven traditional species native to the Land of Israel that are mentioned in the Bible, the others being wheat, barley, the fig, the pomegranate, the grape and the olive. Several Biblical and non-Biblical sources, historical and archaeological among others, have attested to the natural abundance of P. dactylifera in the historical Land of Israel; unfortunately, successions of invaders and their empires wiped out all traces of this beautiful and economically valuable palm, as well as most other species of trees, either through warfare or economic policy.

It wasn't until Jewish refugees from the diaspora arrived in Palestine over one hundred years ago that serious attention was given to the restoration of trees to a land in which they had once flourished. And restore they did, either through massive reforestation or local plantings to the point of obsession. Even today, the inhabitants of a large portion of historical Palestine, who are now called Israelis, still deem it a holy act to plant a tree in their ancient homeland; there is even a national religious holiday (Tu B'Shvat - the fifteenth day of the Hebrew month of Shvat) dedicated solely to it.

Luckily, P. dactylifera was not excluded from this fanatic arboreal recreation. In the early 1900's, the settlers of the cooperative farms still located at the southern point of Lake Kinneret (The Sea of Galilee) first reintroduced this palm to what would become the State of Israel. Nowadays, with over 315,500 cultivated specimens (1.6 percent of the world total), Israel is among the world's top exporters of high quality dates and date products. Israel has numerous date plantations maintained within several cooperative settlements located along the Jordan Valley, stretching from Lake Kinneret to the Dead Sea, where summer temperatures often reach and even exceed 40° C.

The largest of these plantations was founded over seventy years ago at the Kinneret Cooperative Farm; it now produces dates from no less than nine varieties of P. dactylifera. The plantation factory's director, Mr. Neta Mor, referred me to Mr. Zvi Bernstein, a member of the Cooperative, as an expert on date palm horticulture who (at age 75) is currently a researcher at the Tzemah Experimental Station just south of Lake Kinneret. Mr. Bernstein, who published a comprehensive book on the date palm just last year, agreed to be interviewed at the Institute with considerable alacrity. The interview was conducted in Hebrew and was translated and edited by yours truly.

Reuven: How is the Station connected with date palm horticulture?

Zvi: The Station's Date Palm Division aims to increase the yield and quality of several varieties of dates.

Reuven: Is the Division, or anyone else, attempting to cultivate hybrids?

Zvi: No. This was undertaken several years ago in the U.S., but it ended in dismal failure. Among other difficulties, the waiting time for results was too long.

Ceroxylon amazonicum and Wettinia maynensis in forest remnants on a steep mountainside between Limon and Gualaquiza, Morona-Santiago, Ecuador, 1600 m a.s.l..
See article on page 9.
Photo by Martin Gibbons and Tobias W. Spanner

Reuven: Is there a conscious effort to increase the number of specimens under cultivation?

Zvi: Absolutely. Just a few years ago there were about 200,00 such specimens, whereas today there are well over 300,000.

Reuven: We have been speaking about cultivated specimens; I am assuming there are no wild specimens of P. dactylifera growing anywhere in Israel.

Zvi: That is technically incorrect. We have located small, innumerous groups of this palm, scattered throughout the northern Negev Desert. I have some seed samples here in the lab. (Produces a small vial containing about ten seeds that are similar to, but about half the size of, a cultivated Medjool seed - R.Z.)

Reuven: When P. dactylifera was reintroduced in Palestine, where did the seeds come from?

Zvi: An official of the Jewish Agency brought about 1,000 seeds back from Egypt in 1924 and distributed them amongst Kinneret, Degania Aleph and Degania Beyt (Neighbouring cooperative farms along Lake Kinneret - R.Z.)

Reuven: Are any of the palms from these seeds still bearing fruit?

Zvi: Only a few in the Jordan and Jizre'el Valleys.

Reuven: Which are the most common varieties of P. dactylifera now cultivated in Israel?

Zvi: The Medjool, originally from Morocco, accounts for two thirds of Israeli date cultivation; there is also the Hayani, very common in Egypt; the (Deglet) Noor, common in Tunisia and Algeria; and the Barhi, originally from Iraq.

Reuven: How did Israel acquire the Medjool seed?

Zvi: At the time that a terrible plague wiped out nearly the entire Medjool population in Morocco, the Americans located a still healthy specimen and replanted it in California. The offshoots were replanted in the Nevada desert. Every Medjool palm in existence in the whole world today is an offspring of these offshoots!

Reuven: Let's discuss the natural requirements of P. dactylifera.

Zvi: First of all, this palm requires the warm temperatures common to the Middle East and North Africa, where it flourishes natively. It also must receive a lot of direct sunshine.

Reuven: What about soil; anything special required?

Zvi: On the one hand, the type of soil prevalent on date plantations is called hamrah, which is a coarse, sandy, slightly reddish loam. On the other hand, the date palm will flourish in just about any kind of soil, very unlike other types of fruit trees, provided it receives the other environmental necessities.

Reuven: Which are...?

Zvi: Well, I've mentioned proper sunshine and temperature, so I am referring to water.

Reuven: How are cultivated date palms irrigated?

Zvi: The basic method consists of different types of flood irrigation, which may be accomplished with sprinklers, hoses or ditches. However, all Israeli date plantations are unique in their use of the drip system, which ensures the proper amount of water and fertilizer, while preventing expensive waste of water.

Reuven: Isn't fertilizer an important factor?

Zvi: Fertilizer restores to the soil what the plant extracts for its growing needs. Our fertilizers are designed to do just that, and are delivered through the irrigation system.

Reuven: My final question concerns the best method of date palm propagation.

Zvi: There are three known ways of propagating P. dactylifera. One method, of course, is by planting seeds. This is relatively time consuming and involves a high failure rate. The most prevalent method today is the planting of offshoots, which gives one a "head start" in the growth cycle and involves an already flourishing plant. However, the

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Butia Capitata in Panama City. This rare four-headed palm is the only one of its kind known in the world.
See letter on page 16.
Photos by Richard Ferrick

most promising method is propagation through tissue culture. This ensures uniform, healthy palms in large-scale cultivation.

There were, of course, other matters of interest which were discussed, but do not appear on these pages. On my way back home from the interview, I came across the Kinneret Cooperative Farm mentioned earlier, so I decided to locate the plantation manager for the purpose of receiving a guided tour. This proved to be fruitless (pun half intended), so I helped myself to an unguided, albeit fascinating, tour. I was able to view, and touch, the sandy hamrah and a few of the still hard, greenish-yellow unripe dates of the younger, shorter trees. I stood in awe amongst hundreds, nay thousands, of these majestic monuments of nature (and human cultivation), some only as high as my knee, others beckoning at the heavens, and each in its long row according to age. I was then ready to return home, to my wife, two cats and modest garden, in which two lovely specimens of P. dactylifera are prospering.

...continued from page 9

Ecuador - Pearl of the Amazon

trip was a rare species of Ceroxylon native only to the foothills of the Andes in southeastern Ecuador. Ceroxylon have a reputation of requiring constant cool temperatures to grow well. While this may indeed be true for all the high altitude species, there are some that will tolerate moderate heat, in particular C. alpinum, which has a range extending down to 1100 m on the western slopes of the Andes. One little known and very rare species, however, Ceroxylon amazonicum, is definitely the most heat tolerant in the genus and, surprisingly, thrives even under almost tropical conditions. While we discovered that in the upper reaches of its range it grows in cloud and rainforests to around 2000 m (6500 ft.) a.s.l. alongside species such as Wettinia, Ceroxylon echinulatum and Geonoma, it also descends down into the steamy tropical lowland forests as low as 800 m (2600 ft.), where palms such as the stunning Mauritia flexuosa, Syagrus sancona and Oenocarpus bataua are seen close by.

While we found that the distribution and altitudinal range of C. amazonicum is actually much greater than previously recorded (by Colombian botanist Gloria Galeano, who described the species in 1995), and covers many mountain ranges in southeastern Ecuador, it is seriously threatened by deforestation for agriculture, namely cattle pastures. Some populations we had observed on an earlier trip a few years before had visibly declined by the degradation of their natural habitat. In other places, the palms were plentiful, and allowed to remain after the forest around them had been cut down. Despite being saved from the chainsaw, these populations would not be able to survive for very long. Ceroxylon seedlings, like many other palms adapted to growing in dense forests, cannot establish themselves outside of the protective canopy of forest trees that saves them from the scorching tropical sun and foraging cattle. Thus, such populations are effectively kept from rejuvenating and doomed unless the forest is allowed to re-establish itself.

C. amazonicum is arguably the most attractive of the Ceroxylon, forming a smooth, slender, tall trunk that carries a dense, rounded crown of flat, spreading leaves, dark green above and intensely silvery below. The silhouette of the leaf looks very even, as if all leaflets had been clipped to the same length, quite unlike any other Ceroxylon, with the possible exception of C. parvifrons. The latter, however, has a V-shaped, not a flat leaf. Unfortunately, none of the plentiful seeds we saw on the trees were ripe in January and another trip in June was required to harvest some and finally introduce this rare palm to wider cultivation. Our experiences with seedlings brought from Ecuador a few years ago have shown that it is indeed a fairly easy and very fast growing palm that should adapt itself well to many climates where Ceroxylon could not be grown so far.

Ecuador - Pearl of the Amazon

By Tobias W. Spanner, Tizianstr. 44, 80638 Muenchen, Germany, mail@palmsociety.org

While Central Europe was hit by the worst cold in years in January 2003, I was lucky enough to spend a couple of weeks in Ecuador. The smallest country in South America abounds with palms, almost too many to handle. On arriving in the capital, Quito, located at 2800 m in the central valley between the two main ranges of the Andes, rows of Parajubaea greet visitors right outside the airport. Most of Ecuador's population lives in this heavily farmed central valley, a high plateau that is characterized by a year-round cool, dry and sunny climate, and runs north to south through most of the country. The native Parajubaea cocoides thrives everywhere, as do other "exotic" palms such as Phoenix canariensis, Jubaea and Trachycarpus. The capital also boasts a few rare palms such as Ceroxylon ventricosum and C. parvifrons that grace some of the city parks. Quito is just half an hour's drive south from the Equator, and one can feel the intensity of the sun even though the temperatures are anything but tropical due to the altitude. Some of the world's highest volcanoes such as the snow-capped Cotopaxi, Chimborazo and Tungurahua, many of them still active on occasion, protect the valley on the east and west and form some breathtaking scenery, such that you will find in few other places on earth.

Above 3000 m on the cold and cloudy flanks of the mountains stretches the paramo, a most unusual type of vegetation formed mainly by hard, brown grass, giant Bromeliads (Puya), Blechnum ferns with small trunks and, in some places, millions of Espeletia, palm-like plants with soft, rabbit-ear-like leaves and bright yellow flowers that give away their close relationship with such profane plants as dandelions and sunflowers. The Puyas look a lot like the more familiar but completely unrelated Dasylirion with their large rosettes of strap-like, prickly, bluish leaves. Even their flowering structure, which arises as a huge spike from the center of the plant, resembles that of the Mexican Sotols (Dasylirion). Due to the constant low temperatures and the humidity brought in by a never ending procession of clouds from the Pacific or Amazon slopes of the mountains, organic matter breaks down slowly and builds up to form a thick, peaty layer.

The Pacific and Amazon slopes of the Andes, where the constant onslaught of rain-laden clouds brings plenty of precipitation (several meters per year in some areas), are the areas with the greatest diversity of palms. Coming from the mountain passes at 3500 or 4000 m in the Paramo, one descends through enchanted cloud forests, abounding with tree ferns, bromeliads, orchids and high altitude palms such as Ceroxylon and Geonoma. At mid-altitudes, palms become even more plentiful. Several Wettinia, spiny Aiphanes, slender Prestoea, stunning Dictyocaryum and Iriartea, and the beautiful Euterpe precatoria can be seen, sometimes in great numbers. In the northwest, the famous Ivory Nut Palms, Phytelephas, cover many hillsides with their unkempt crowns. The giant heads of incredibly hard seeds are still collected in vast numbers by local peoples for the manufacture of small, ivory-like carvings that are sold in local markets and in souvenir shops as well as being exported around the world.

A specific palm we had come to revisit on this

Continued on page 8...

Costa Rica's "Austrian Rainforest"

By Karl Glatz and Birgit Stadler, Hofj%ogerstrasse 7/12, 1140 Wien, Austria

The "Austrian rainforest" is located in the south of Costa Rica and is a kind of development project with the objective of sustaining primary rainforests. We decided to undertake a journey to the Austrian rainforest in the autumn of 2002, and we booked the trip for over New Year's. After a long and tiring journey from Vienna we reached San Jose, Costa Rica's capital, where we spent a short night before heading to Golfito near the Panamanian border in a small single-engine plane. It was then we got carried away by the beauty of the rainforest.

The forests were still covered in mist, with the Rio Esquinas meandering through the scenery towards the Golfo Dulce. The airport we were approaching was small; in fact, very small. When we suddenly saw a huge rocky wall in front of us during our landing we were uncertain whether our adventure holiday would have to end right there and then. Thanks to our skilful pilot we landed safely and after a short while the driver of the rainforest lodge we had booked picked us up in a cross-country vehicle, which had surely seen better times.

Contrary to the moderate climate prevailing in San Jose which is at an altitude of 1000 meters, Golfito welcomed us with its hot and humid rainforest climate typical of Costa Rica's south. The half-hour journey to the rainforest lodge was of impressive beauty. From the vehicle we could see numerous palm species and different kinds of tree fern. All the plants we cultivate in our flat in Vienna, we could see growing by the roadside. Upon our arrival at the lodge, we were proudly shown the planted garden. Besides a variety of exotic fruits which we could literally eat straight from the tree, I also saw numerous palm species from all over the world such as Cyrtostachys renda, Brahea dulcis (at least according to the label), Roystonea regia, Licuala grandis, Aiphanes aculeata, Euterpe, Areca and different Pinangas. The paths were covered in palm seeds, which germinated everywhere and were a nuisance for gardeners.

I was even more curious to discover native palm trees, which we would hopefully discover along one of the numerous, well laid out jungle paths. The Austrian rainforest is predominantly composed of untouched primary forest. Admittedly naming the huge variety of palm species is simply asking too much. I could recognize various Chamaedoreas, but due to a lack of good literature I could not specify them any further. Luckily that evening I found a book in the lodge that gave me more details about the most important palm species in the region. Thanks to the book I could make out a great many species on my following jungle trip. Among them I detected Cryosophila guagara and even Socratea exorrhiza, which are found numerously in the area. Despite the large amount of snakes–we caught sight of three fine specimens (up to 2 m in length) of the very malicious, fatal Bothrops asper–I made the decision to leave our relatively safe path to look for seeds.

Top left: A tree fern in the genus Cyathea.
Top right: Cryosphila guagara with bunches of ripe yellow seeds hanging below the crown.
Bottom left: The impressive stilt roots of Socratea exorrizha.
Bottom right: Seedlings grown in Vienna from the Costa Rican seeds.
Photos by Karl Glatz and Birgit Stadler

By means of throwing a stick I could get hold of some ripe seeds of a Cryosophila guagara. I could further collect a variety of other seeds I was not able to define any more specifically. One seed I picked up, however, was that of a rare species which natives call "tapir palm" since tapirs apparently very much enjoy eating the palm's leaves. The palm tree shows similarities to Pinanga coronata. Unfortunately I could not detect a single Socratea exhorriza with ripe seeds. The stilt roots of these impressive palm trees are actually big enough to walk underneath. Natives call this one the "walking palm" since it apparently bends towards the light with its stilt roots.

We stayed in this paradise for nine days soaking up the jungle atmosphere with its tropical climate and perpetual "background noise": bats on the walls of our wooden lodge, lizards on the door handles and at times even in my shirt collar, and during dinner a tame parrot attacked our plates. From the dining table we could watch numerous small humming-birds flying around. A domesticated Cayman with a length of 1,5 m, answering to the name "Lorenzo", moves freely between the rainforest and the lodge.

Subsequent to our stay at the lodge we visited some of the great many National Parks in Costa Rica, where I also had the opportunity to collect seeds. These included the Carara National Park, which is composed of so-called dry rainforests with numerous Astrocaryum standleyanum, Socratea exorrhiza, and again Attalea and types of Chamedorea; the Manuel Antonio National Park where, apart from the species already mentioned, are also Bactris und Raphia; and a high altitude forest reserve "Monte Verde" in the north of the country. There it rained so heavily all day with temperatures around 15 degrees Celsius that we had no other option but miss out on the tours due to unsuitable equipment.

Back home, we planted our collected seeds immediately and after no more than two weeks I could already detect the first seedlings. Today, exactly one year after sowing, the germinated plants have already grown nicely. I am particularly proud of the Astrocaryum standleyanum, with a germination rate exceeding 50 %. That plant is growing impressively fast, shows resistance to our dry air indoors, and after a year already carries four leaves with a total height of 30 cm. The Cryosophila guagara also grows beautifully with our conditions here in our flat in Vienna. A selection of our self-raised plants can also be seen in the photo. Among them Astrocaryum standleyanum (in slim, tall pot), Cryosophila guagara (in hydroponics), and other species not further known.

Perhaps one day one of our journeys will take us back to this beautiful and wild country. Until then, I would definitely advise anyone who wants to explore the rainforest on foot not to forget their rubber boots.

Four years ago, we moved to a small farm in a fertile valley just as it leaves the central foothills. The valley drains one side of Massanella, a mountain higher than Ben Nevis, so, although the torrent only flows after storms, there is always plenty of ground water readily available from our own medieval well. After we had updated the 1970s modernisation of the very old stone house, we set-to in the front garden, in which we inherited

...continued from page 14

Paradise for Palm Enthusiasts

the seeds in water for 3 days and planted them. 24 days later the first one sprouted and now mine have two leaves while those in Miami already have three or four. From the rest off the seeds that I took home, only one has sprouted so far (Sabal palmetto). I guess in Holland palms and palm seeds take a lot longer to sprout and grow big than in tropical Miami, but on the other hand my Trachycarpus fortunei looks much happier in our cool climate then the one I saw in Fairchild Tropical Gardens.

My Trachycarpus Palms

By George Oakes, 57 Abbey Rd., Lowton St Marys, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 IEP, U.K.

Trachycarpus fortunei was originally found by Robert Fortune growing as an avenue tree on Chusan, one of the colder islands off the coast of China. It can be seen all over the warmer regions of China and will grow in excess of 40 ft. in height in its native climate, although it will take 40 years or more to do so. My niece had one growing in her garden in Armidale, New South Wales, Australia, which grew at a very fast rate. It put on 6 ft. in a couple of years, with dark green fan leaves all down the trunk. The area is called New England and does get some frost and snow in winter, so that tells us what the best climate is for it to grow well. It has survived temperatures down as low as —20°C after its trunk has reached 2 or 3 ft. If the trunk is shorter, —10°C is the protection point. To insulate, throw something over the center of the leaves to keep the frost from that area. Fleece is very good, as it is warm and lets humidity through. T. fortunei will grow unprotected in most parts of the British Isles, the milder parts of Western Europe.

Due to their special structure, the roots do no damage to buildings so the palm may be planted up close to walls and house foundations. Most palms grow a root system that does not take up too much space in your garden. Grown against a wall, the trunk may lean outwards, giving it that coconut type shape that lots of people try to achieve. Some people will cut the roots to bend a palm that way, but the old wall trick does it for you while sparing the roots. Cutting roots slows the growth rate down quite a lot.

T. fortunei does not like a lot of wind, so plant it away from windy corners. While the palm will not be kept from growing at its normal pace, the leaves will be ripped to shreds, making it look very untidy. Do give this palm lots of manure--it loves it!! Mine gets several hundred pounds every winter. As a result it put out 17 new leaves this year and the trunk is about 18 inches thick. Manure not only puts growth into a faster mode, but it also gives the rootball frost protection, with the straw or hay adding a great deal of humus to the ground as well.

All types of Trachycarpus can be grown in pots and brought inside for the winter to be used as winter decoration in a cool room. The dwarf Trachycarpus nanus, however, should be grown outside in the ground. It does not like to be overwatered, and of the six I had in pots all died from water. Even though I did not water them very much (once a month in winter), I lost the lot. The one I planted outside, however, is still growing well, even though it has had frost, some snow, and as much rain as you can get in the Northwest of England.

I have several Trachycarpus species growing in my garden, and all show some disregard to cold. T. martianus looks different from the others in that its leaves are larger and lighter green with a silvery edge of down. The fibres on the trunk are not quite as fluffy as those of T. fortunei. It is not as hardy as the others, but still winters in the ground, with fleece thrown over the growing point. My plant is 3 ft. high with a 2 ft. trunk. I have not had any trouble with it, and it has been growing outside for the last two or three years.

T. takil, I find, looks just the same as T. fortunei, except for its more yellow green leaves, which are very stiff. I have to say it is just as hardy as T. fortunei, and requires very little attention once planted out. My T. wagnerianus, seems to grow very slowly. I have had one for five years, and while it still grows along, it is way behind the other species in height. Maybe it will grow faster once planted in the ground; mine is still in a large pot and winters inside a small greenhouse. T. nanus, as mentioned before, does not like water if you grow it in a pot. In the garden it fares best in a sunny position and likes soil that is freely draining.

Paradise for Palm Enthusiasts

By Mark Scholtes, Pieterstraat 21, 6372 AR Landgraaf, The Netherlands

In April this year, we flew to Miami to visit my brother in law for two weeks. Miami is filled with tropical vegetation and the first plants I saw when we came out the airport were, of course, palm trees. In fact, palms are probably the plants most frequently used here in landscaping. In many places you can see mass plantings of palms, a magnificent sight. Most frequently used for this purpose were Roystonea, Sabal palmetto, Cocos nucifera, Washingtonia, Bismarckia nobilis, Phoenix, and a few others. Palms with a height of 5 meter and more were used in many places for instant landscaping and we even saw some lying on large trucks, being transported to their planting site.

On the third day of our visit we went to Fairchild Tropical Gardens. This place is paradise for palm enthusiasts. The moment you enter the garden the views are magnificent. Everywhere you look there are palm trees, between them borders with many other exotic plants such as Agave, Yucca, cacti, bananas and cycads, mostly planted together in well-planned groups. Underneath some palm groves you can find other exotics with magnificent flowers on them. A little train runs trough the garden for those who are tired of walking, the gardens are quite large. For about 40 minutes, the train driver gives an overview of the garden and its plants. For everyone visiting Miami, Fairchild Tropical Gardens is an absolute must. Pictures from this garden can look good but walking between all these palms and other exotic plants yourself is just fantastic.

One day when we were sightseeing, we saw a sign that pointed to palms for sale. We stopped and entered a big garden with lots off palms in it. After a few minutes the owner came out of the house and asked me what palm I was looking for. I told him that I was from Holland and I was looking for a Rhapis excelsa for my brother in law but he did not have that one in stock unfortunately. We talked about palms a little and he was very interested in the palms we try outside in Holland. Most off his palms were tropical and he showed me how fast a Roystonea elata could grow here. He had a very old specimen in his garden that had to be more than 60 years old and was there before he built his house and nursery. The rings on the trunk were only 4 or 5cm apart from each other. Another Roystonea elata, next to the tall one, he had planted him self about 15 years ago. Here, the rings on the trunk were about 15 to 18cm apart. The difference was made possible by lots of fertilizer and water. When you knocked on the stem it was like knocking on a melon, full off water, while the stem from the old tree sounded hard and full, like real wood.

During my holiday I collected a lot of palm seeds from various trees to take them back home with me to Holland. In the driveway next to the house were we stayed grew a huge Washingtonia. The seeds were all around the palm and every morning new fresh seeds were on the pavement. I collected about 100 seeds to take home and some of them I just put in a pot and watered them every day. 8 days later we went home and one week later my brother in law called me and told me the seeds were spouting. When I came home I soaked

Continued on page 12...

Top: Coconuts, royals and scew pines at the far end of the garden where it merges into a mangrove swamp.
Bottom: A couple of ancient and heavily branching Dioon.
Photos by Mark Scholtes

Letters

Panama City Butia

I ran across your website and I would like to share a picture of a Butia capitata we have in our city. I'm the network administrator for the City of Panama City, Florida, USA. We have a palm that started growing at our water treatment facility and as you can see from the picture, it's the most unique palm you will ever see. The picture shows the palm after our city officials decided to move it. We added a metal frame to help support the palm. I plan to have it on our website soon. www.cityofpanamacity.com

The plaque on the fence around the palm reads: Butia Capitata - Pindo Palm. This rare four-headed palm, the only one of its kind known in the world, is dedicated to the people of Panama City. It was relocated from the City's water treatment facility on May 3, 1997. This was made possible by: City of Panama City/Dept. Leisure Services, International Palm Society (Gulf Coast Chapter), Robert Reinheimer (coordinator/harvester), Deep South Crane, Kurt Schmidt (fabricator), City of Panama City Utility Dept., Panama City Rentals.
Thanks, Richard Ferrick

See pictures on page 6.

Cameroon

I have just received the latest copy (47) of Chamaerops plus two back issues, which which for a new palm enthusiast and member of the EPS were a pretty exciting arrival, I certainly now do not feel alone in my new found obsession for palms and other exotic plants. I started about 2 years ago by purchasing a couple of Trachycarpus.fortunei as they seem to be the only ones apart from Cordyline that are readily available. On a trip to the Algarve I managed to get through customs a very small Washingtonia filifera, maybe 1 year old, which I kept inside until about April as I wasn't sure of it's cold hardiness. It is now doing very well. The coldest spell last winter was down to —6°C. Do you think it would have survived this low?

I have also just got back from a visit to the Cameroon where a friend of mine is working. There were lots of palms growing in Cameroon, most of which were the African Oil palms. They were everywhere, some over 80 years old and looked to be about 80 or 90 feet tall!. Local people are tapping them for wine. I tasted the palm wine straight from the palm, it was OK, tasted a bit like unfermented homemade wine, very cloudy and a bit yeasty. These palms seemed to be the main source of income here for many of the tribes in the north west of the country, as they produce fruit for most of the year.

I was actually staying in the north west of the country for the majority of my stay which is at quite high altitude, but if you head south, down to the lowlands, it gets extremely hot and humid. The most common palm is the Coconut palm, which seems best suited to the humid environment. I stayed a couple of nights in the south and some of the palms I spotted there included Roystonea. I actually paid a visit to the botanical gardens in Limbe. Here they had an excellent collection of exotic plants and palms. Another Palm encountered in Cameroon was a Rattan palm, locally referred to as Raffia cane and used for making chairs, fences, buildings etc. This grew mainly in the north.
Thanks, Vic Silver vic.s@breathe.com

Dear Vic,

Your Washingtonia may have survived the —6° C but it was probably a good idea to keep it inside over the winter. With increasing age, their cold hardiness improves dramatically. A mature tree can survive -8 to -10° C with little or no damage, and dry frosts to -

12° C or even lower. Plants can survive much lower temperatures but usually lose all their leaves. Hardiness in Washingtonia depends a lot on humidity and plants benefit greatly from a rain protection in winter.

By the way, it is perfectly legal to bring palms from Spain. Within the European Union there are no restrictions anymore for any plants for personal use and only few restrictions for the nursery trade.

T.S.

See pictures on page 19.

Letter from Hawaii

The reason I write this is to alert you to what is happening here in Hawaii, in regard to some people's fears of alien plant species. The landscape and nursery industry has been targeted as the cause of 80% of invasive plant species putting our native species at risk.

Each of the Hawaiian Islands now has an invasive species committee with an umbrella group statewide. They are bringing up many valid concerns and are VERY well organized. They are promoting something called the New Zealand model which is a 50 point rating system to determine which species they label as pests not to be planted or sold. Fortunately, the LICH (Landscape Industry of Hawaii) has taken the bull by the horns and are attempting to be self-regulated rather than have these committees get bills passed that would be very severe and detrimental to the Agricultural Industry as a whole.

I am in full support of the efforts to protect our native species, but was quite concerned that Washingtonia robusta, W. filifera, coffee, guava, allspice and numerous others have already been identified as pest species. The same criteria used on many other palms like the genera Pinanga, Ptychosperma, Archontophoenix, Phoenix, Dypsis, Livistona, Arenga, Chamaedorea, Roystonea, Sabal and Nypa might label these as pests as well. In fact, almost any other palm capable of reseeding itself could have this designation applied. This alone would be unfortunate, but to make matters more serious, we have at least one nursery threatened with a fine because they had coqui tree frogs on their grounds and are required to eradicate the frogs as an alien species. The same mind set could force nurseries and landscapers to discontinue using any palms labelled as pests. Incidentally, several macadamia nut growers around the nursery believe the tree frogs have actually increased their profits by reducing nut boring insects (which are also not native).

I am happy to see our islands protected from unwanted pests, but I feel it is important for the Palm Society to be aware of what is going on. If we are proactive and have input in the process, we hopefully can avoid throwing out the baby with the bathwater.

Norman Bezona, Hawaii

Southwest Towns and Cities

Dear Mr. Spanner, how right you are in your Editorial of the No.47 edition of Chamaerops about the much wider availability of palms. When I first began searching for palms and other exotics from the early 70s, I found it extremely difficult to obtain anything of interest. Occasionally I saw Cordyline australis, but tracking down Trachycarpus fortunei was so difficult that I grew some from seed picked up in a Cornish churchyard. Phoenix canariensis, likewise, took me years to find, and that in our own county of Devon and nearby Cornwall, by far the most mild and 'palmy' regions of Britain. Now things are very different. Cordyline are sold everywhere, from supermarkets to roadside petrol stations. Someone at a local garden centre told me that they have sold thousands of Phoenix canariensis over the past few years. Trachycarpus, Chamaerops, Butia, other palms, and things like bananas and Dicksonia are less freely available but are now to be found in all good garden centres in Southwest England.

The sad thing is that all the 'palmy things' seem to be going in to private gardens. The parks and gardens departments of our Southwest towns and cities seem to have great reservations about planting anything exotic. The problem seems to

be that the one who takes the responsibility for the decision making as to what goes in the gardens dreads having to answer to the council if the coldest winter on record should follow and something should die. The fact that huge specimens of palms that are many years old may grow in adjacent private gardens does not seem to be taken into account.

There are, however, two exceptions: Torquay in Devon, where they are beginning to plant small numbers of a variety of palms; and Falmouth in Cornwall, which must be the most adventurous 'palmy' town in Britain. The enclosed photographs gives just two examples: the large roundabout at the main approach to Falmouth, and the bank at the end of the approach to the beach with its Puyas and Agaves. Just inland is the Fox Rosehill Garden with numerous varieties of palms and other exotics, including a huge flowering tree of Datura. Palm enthusiasts should just walk along the sea front and the adjacent streets and look into the gardens to see Phoenix and other exotics in considerable numbers and in first class condition. In one place not far away, Phormium, Cordyline, and Geranium maderensis have naturalised on the cliffs and I have been told that a Chamaerops is growing in one inaccessible place. Yours sincerely,

Rev. Geoffrey Squire, Little Cross, Northleigh Hill, Goodleigh, Barnstaple, Devon EX32 7NR, U.K.

See pictures on page 21.

USDA Zone 8 vs. USDA Zone 8: It's Not the Same!

It is hard to believe that Dallas and Paris are both USDA zone 8. Paris is at 48° northern latitude and Dallas is at 32° latitude, the same as Casablanca, Morocco. They both have about the same average winter minimum low temperature, between 20 and 10°F (-7 and -12°C), and while they share many exotic looking plants that can grow in both climates, the long cool winters in Paris allow other exotics to thrive there that would wither in Dallas' summer heat. Likewise many heat loving plants grow exuberantly in Dallas while languishing in Paris.

I was in Paris Disneyland recently and the landscape designers used many of the plants that I use in Dallas to create a tropical looking effect. The plants used both in Paris and Dallas are: Trachycarpus fortunei, Fatsia japonica, Persian Ivy, Catalpa, Golden Bamboo, Black Bamboo, Loquat, Mimosa, Yucca recurvifolia and Brugmansia. Exotic plants that do well in Paris but not Dallas are for instance Sequoia gigantean, which is everywhere, the Monkey Puzzle Tree (Araucaria) and Cordyline australis.

Ones that do better in Dallas than in Paris are Live Oaks, Lantana, Crepe Myrtle (but they do live and flower in Paris too, just not used much), Chamaerops humilis (it lives but doesn't look good and isn't used much), Sabals, Washingtonia and the large Japanese timber bamboos. Many tropical flowers are common in US South. Most tropical looking plants do better with warmer weather, so our favorite exotics look better in Dallas and grow faster than in Paris.

The cooler climate of Paris allows for other exotics to be grown that prefer the cooler summers. Monkey Puzzles and Sequoias look spectacular here. Also temperate trees like cherries, and plums are lush and dense here with heavy bloom each spring. Many zone 7 plants thrive in Paris like Paper birch, blue spruce and liliac. These are plants that are almost impossible to grow in Dallas. Both cities are classified as USDA zone 8 but with strong differences. I've tried to only mention plants that I've seen in large quantities in a variety of locations. Not just protected microclimate sites. I thought you might enjoy my observations.

Tony Cerbone, Dallas, Texas, U.S.A. TonyDFW@prodigy.net

See pictures on page 21.

Top: Palm seeds being boiled and crushed in a hollowed-out tree trunk to release the oil. Ngang, Cameroon.
Bottom: Anthony gearing up to climb an Oil Palm for tapping its flower stalks. The hollowed gourd is used to catch the sugary sap. Photos by Vic Silver
See letter „Cameroon" on page 16.

Palm Ailments

I am a member of the Palm Society and look forward to each and every edition of Chamaerops. I am a keen amateur, but not very knowledgeable when it comes to identifying certain ailments that cause these magnificent trees to die. The books by David Jones and Martin Gibbons are of great help, but the information contained in these books has not helped me to identify the causes of diseases and, subsequently, I have lost a number of Cordyline and palm trees.

I am wondering if in future editions of Chamaerops it would be possible to provide pictures and articles that show certain ailments and advice on how to correct these ailments. For example, I have Cordylines that have yellow spotting on their strap-like leaves and, on the red version, green spotting. I have tried high nitrogen feeds but to no avail. I also have a Phoenix canariensis that gets rot halfway up its fronds and none of the books are able to identify what causes this. I feel it would be of great benefit to people like myself to be able to identify and then correct ailments in order to keep the plants looking healthy. Keep up the good work.

Yours Sincerely,
Michael O'Brien, 206, The Roundabout, Northfield, Birmingham B31 2UA, U.K.

Dear Michael,

We will try to identify the problems of you palms if you send in some photographs. The EPS Internet Forum is also a great place to get help from other enthusiasts. If you want to get seriously involved with identifying palm diseases, I can highly recommend the following book (also available in the EPS online bookstore):

Broschat, T. K. & A. W. Meerow. 2000. Ornamental Palm Horticulture. University Press of Florida. ISBN 0-8130-1804-8

T.S.

Please send letters, articles and pictures to

The European Palm Society
c/o Tobias W. Spanner
Tizianstr. 44
80638 München
Germany
E-mail: mail@palmsociety.org

Top left: Trachycarpus fortunei outside in Paris.
Top right: Two old Araucaria araucana.
Middle left: Landscaping with Trachys and Yuccas at Euro-Disney.
Middle right: A Giant Redwood in Paris, impossible in Dallas.
Photos by Tony Cerbone
See letter „USDA Zone 8 vs. USDA Zone 8. It's Not the Same!" on page 18.

Bottom: A bank at the end of the approach to the beach in Falmouth with Puyas and Agaves.
Photo by Rev. Geoffrey Squire
See letter „Southwest Towns and Cities" on page 17.

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21 x 14,5 cm.
Verlag: The European Palm Society,
ISBN: 3000072365

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