

# Chamaerops



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*Cover: A group of Trachycarpus latisectus in the Old Cemetery in Darjeeling, West-Bengal, India, where it seems to reproduce quite happily.  
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.

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### Membership rates:

*Chamaerops only*: 1 year £15. *Online only*: 1 year £12, 2 years £20, 3 years £24. *Chamaerops & Online*: 1 year £20, 2 years £36, 3 years £48. *Upgrade*: Members currently off-line can upgrade their membership to ,Chamaerops & Online': 1 year +£5, 2 years +£10, 3 years +£15. **For any online membership queries please visit [www.palmssociety.org](http://www.palmssociety.org)**

Time flies and there just simply isn't enough of it. Hard to believe I have let nearly a year pass since the last issue. I promise I will get out the next few issues in rapid succession. It is not that I have been lazy; to the contrary, I have just too much going on, as always. If anyone would like to help with editing articles or writing some, please just let me know. As the great response to the survey in issue 50 shows, lots of you have opinions and a few minutes to spare to give voice to them, so consider spending a few moments jotting down your experiences with your plants or even just posting a question.

We are such a varied society comprising so many different countries and that should result in a very interesting collection of stories and ideas. However, this may actually be one of our problems. As one reader noted, so many of our members are not native English speakers and--while it is one thing to enjoy reading the articles--it is quite another to write something for publication. Please do not let worries about writing "correctly" keep you from sending in submissions. We have a language editor who edits every submission (and every editorial!) for grammar, punctuation and the like, while trying to alter the piece as little as possible so as to retain the writer's voice. Therefore, if it is the writing itself that concerns you, do not let this be an impediment to sharing your thoughts.

As I mentioned, the survey in issue 50 was a great success. We had 90 responses, about half by mail or e-mail, the other half as responses to the online version that was on the website for a while. Here are the results with a few of my comments:

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

Professional interest: 12  
Hobbyist : 78

## 2. For how many years have you been an EPS

### member?

1-2 years: 38  
3-5 years: 23  
6 or more years: 29

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

Very likely: 76  
Somewhat likely: 10  
Not likely: 0  
Don't know: 4

*[Ed.: I am especially happy to see this result!]*

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

I read almost every article: 68  
I read some articles: 20  
I just look at the pictures: 0  
I rarely look at it at all: 2

*[Ed.: It would also have been interesting to find out how many of you prefer the printed version over the website edition or vice versa.]*

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

Almost every day: 1  
1 - 3 times each week: 15  
1 - 3 times each month : 12  
A few times per year but less than once per month: 19  
I have internet access but rarely visit the EPS site: 12  
I have no internet access: 7

*[Ed.: Members who filled out the questionnaire online were more frequent visitors of the website, as I would have expected.]*

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

Just the EPS: 63  
The EPS and one other palm society: 22  
The EPS and several other palm societies: 5



[Ed.: There was a significant difference between online and magazine questionnaires here. Only very few people who filled out the questionnaire online were members of another palm society. Quite honestly I am not sure what to make of that result, if anything.]

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

European meetings and plant trips:	30
Local meetings and tours of gardens:	40
Books on palms published by the EPS:	32
More activities on the EPS website :	13
I am happy with just Chamaerops:	13

[Ed. Here is your chance to get actively involved with the EPS: Organize a local or European meeting. I will be very happy to help with the organization, provide contacts and announce the event accordingly. Of course EPS funds can also be made available for the planning stage. As for books, we currently simply do not have the funds to invest in publications; however, I would be happy to publish a small book in the form of a special issue of *Chamaerops*.]

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

Pay contributors:	3
Pay for articles by professionals:	11
Reprint more articles from other palm journals:	55
Reward contributors with free memberships:	26

[Ed.: Clearly I should be getting more material into *Chamaerops* from other palm publications. Considering that most of our members are not members of another palm society, at least according to the survey, there should be very few overlaps here.]

Other suggestions on how we might fight the shortage of articles (with editor's comments):

“Get articles into print faster. It took at least 12 months for the article I wrote to appear in print.”  
[Ed.: I apologize for this, really. We can't put out an

issue until there are enough articles, and even then articles get delayed because of spacing problems that don't appear until the layout is done.]

“Contact previous authors about updating articles.”

[Ed.: This would be something I could use help with, contacting people for follow-ups, especially on garden articles].

“Ask me.”

[Ed.: I think there has been plenty of pleading for articles since the EPS started out, and I have personally asked for articles in nearly every issue I have edited. Other than sending personal requests to every member of the EPS, I am not sure what more I can do in this area.]

“Reprint more articles from other palm journals. 1) Have a series of articles to cover topics in good detail, e.g., articles on palm botany. 2) Cover non-palm ,exotic‘ plants.”

[Ed.: We have recently had the issue on germinating palm seeds. I would be happy to expand that. Please send in suggestions for popular themes.]

“Other rewards. Contributors are likely to be members already. Maybe award points per article to exchange for vouchers/gifts etc.”

[Ed.: Technically this is a good idea, but this would cause additional bureaucracy that we have nobody to attend to.]

“Maybe you could pay for one article for each issue by professionals.”

[Ed.: This is a suggestion that I will try to pursue.]

“Why not make some „photo reports“ of public gardens?”

[Ed.: As much as I would love to do this, we cannot put in any additional photographs as colour pages are more expensive than black and white. Until that changes, we need something written along with the photos in each issue. In general though, I would be happy to receive more picture contributions. If you have lots of digital pictures and can burn them on a CD and send them in I would warmly welcome such submissions even without any text.]

Top left: The three-headed *Dicksonia* in a shady place behind the house.

Top right: Large *Dicksonias* with orchids.

Bottom: *Chamaerops humilis* „Vulcano“ enjoys a place in full sun.

Photos by Fredy Ruethemann

See article on page 9.



“If the magazine was published on a regular basis, I think people like myself would try and make a contribution.”

*[Ed.: This is like deciding which came first, the chicken or the egg, if you can for a moment imagine that you are the chickens and the eggs are the articles. If I collect and hatch the eggs regularly there might be an increase in eggs (according to this respondent), but I cannot hatch the eggs regularly if there are no eggs to hatch. In other words, due to a continual lack of articles, the magazine comes out irregularly. Due to this irregularity, some people do not want to contribute. I will take some of the blame as I am also just a part-time farmer (if you will humour me to continue the metaphor a bit). I am trying to make as much time available as I can for Chamaerops, but unfortunately this is not the only thing I do, so please be easy on me.]*

## 9. What is your age?

Under 30:	7
30-39:	26
40-49:	21
50-59:	25
60 or older :	11

## 10. Ideas, comments, suggestions (again with editors comments):

“It would be very interesting to get seeds of rare palms and cycads or plants.”

*[Ed.: Donations of seeds to the EPS would be warmly welcome. We will happily distribute any seeds. As for plants, perhaps that would be a bit too complicated, but maybe the EPS forum would be a good place to trade.]*

“Free back issues.”

*[Ed.: Our main problem with distributing back issues is postage costs; that is why they can't be made available without any charge. Prices are pretty much as low as*

*we can get them anyway.]*

“New sections or columns in Chamaerops.”  
Suggestions for new sections or columns included:

- Advice on container grown palms.

*[Ed.: Please write, even if it is just questions. I will be happy to answer.]*

- A beginner's corner – advice for novice.

*[Ed.: Again, questions are welcome and I will be happy to answer them.]*

- Palms with water features, i.e. ponds.

*[Ed.: This would make a great article with photographs of some good examples if someone is willing to write it.]*

- A questions and answers page.

*[Ed.: Unless I suddenly get a lot of questions I would keep them in the Letters section. Someone needs to ask the questions though. Please don't hesitate; as someone once said, the only stupid question is the one not asked.]*

- Stories and photos of member's gardens and how they have developed over the years.

*[Ed.: This is a great article suggestion for anyone who has kept track of his/her garden's progression in notes and in pictures. Additionally, it would be great if someone could come forward who has a little spare time to contact other authors who have written about their gardens in past Chamaerops issues and ask them to write a follow-up.]*

“Try advertising in plant magazines.”

*[Ed.: We would welcome any donation that would enable us to do so. A cheaper and perhaps more effective version that any member could do would be to contact a plant magazine you know or your local paper and tell them about your exotic garden. Papers and magazines are always looking for interesting material like this and may send around a reporter to cover the story. Mention the EPS and tell them what palms are all about.]*

“Encourage more members to join the web site. By keeping them in touch they will be more likely to join in and contribute.”

*[Ed.: Very true. [www.palmsociety.org](http://www.palmsociety.org) is a great website with an active forum to get in touch with other members. If you have not done so yet, please do try*

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*Top left: A jungle of Trachycarpus, Brahea and Rhipidophyllum.  
Top right: Brahea armata in front of two Trachycarpus fortunei. To the right a trunk of Washingtonia.  
Bottom left: A young Trachycarpus latisectus.  
Bottom right: Trachycarpus martianus doing exceptionally well in my garden.  
Photos by Fredy Ruethemann  
See article on page 9.*

out the website.]

“I enjoy belonging to The EPS and using the web site. I look forward to the magazine but the members who do not use the web site must be lost and forgotten as the magazine is so infrequent.”

*[Ed.: The situation is not ideal, but as I said I am trying the best I can. Anyone willing to help is very welcome.]*

“It would be nice if Tobias and Martin would join in the discussions on the EPS web site. They both seem very distant.”

*[Ed.: I can only speak for myself. I visit the forum on occasion and would like to do so more frequently; but, again, time is always an issue.]*

“I think the main problem with the EPS has always been the late issue of articles. People become disillusioned. We need to find a way to ensure it goes out on time.”

*[Ed.: I hate to repeat myself, but if I had more articles and more help with editing, Chamaerops would appear more punctually. Remember that we are a society that lives from members' contributions.]*

“Discounts on plant purchases through various outlets to EPS members.”

*[Ed.: Since the EPS does not grow plants, that would really have to be an initiative of nurseries that would be willing to give discounts to EPS members. Somebody would need to work out a proposal and then approach nurseries to find out if they would be willing to participate.]*

“The questionnaire should allow more than one answer to each question, i.e. I am both a professional and a hobbyist.”

*[Ed.: Point taken. I guess in my mind someone who is “both” is a professional who is just lucky enough to really enjoy what he/she does for a living.]*

“I think you should reserve a web site area to interchange different palms seeds on a free basis with other members.”

*[Ed.: If there is a large enough group interested in this, we can certainly install such a feature. Since the EPS will have to pay for the installation, I would like*

*to hear from more people before we do this. For now, anyone is welcome to use the forum for seed or plant offers--non-commercial, of course.]*

“Seems fine as it is :-)”

*[Ed.: Thanks!]*

“I was at the meeting at Kew last spring. It was most enjoyable and informative. This type of event is worthwhile and I would encourage more meetings.”

*[Ed.: The main problem is usually finding someone to organize such an event. If I know well ahead of time I will be happy to announce meetings in Chamaerops or on the EPS website. I know of other plant societies that have regular meetings with talks etc., but someone needs to organize a room and speakers or approach botanical gardens for tours.]*

“Set up feedback pages like on the rare palm seeds site. Tips, etc., for germinating various species. Could also build up a picture of which outlets provide the best seeds?”

*[Ed.: Currently we just do not have the funds or the help to expand the website. Almost all of members' dues currently go into the production of Chamaerops.]*

“No pro garden journalists please.”

*[Ed.: I don't think it will ever come to that.]*

This discussion provided a lot of helpful material and I hope we can keep some of this discussion going. Anyone ready to help put into practice any of the suggestions mentioned here please come forward!

Since renewals are due with this issue, at least for those who have not prepaid for two years, I hope all of you will rejoin speedily to minimize our administrative efforts and so that you will receive the next issues without interruption.

T.S.



# My Exotic Garden

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*By Fredy Ruethemann, „Casa Amazonia,“ Via Righetto 6992, Cimo, Switzerland*

For the past 30 years or so I have felt at my best in botanical gardens. The more tropical the better. I started my garden 23 years ago here in Cimo, Ticino, above Lake Lugano, at 460 metres above sea level on the southern edge of the Alps. At that time, the old American School in Lugano had been torn down and the land sold. It was an enormous plot of land with many *Trachycarpus fortunei* of all sizes, camelia, azalea, Rhododendron, passion flowers, *Musa basjoo*, and *Yucca gloriosa* up to 3 metres high. A luxurious retirement home was built on this site and the gorgeous plants and trees had to be given away. Young and strong, I took advantage of this opportunity and was able to plant my garden with them.

In 1990, I heard that a young Swiss-German named Andy Peter was selling cold-hardy palms here in southern Switzerland. Thus, I came upon my first exotic plants. At that time, *Trachycarpus wagnerianus* was completely unknown here. In the meantime, this *Trachycarpus wagnerianus* has grown from a „baby“ into a stately 3.6 metre palm. A *Rhapidophyllum hystrix* of 20 cm grew into a 1.8 metre shrub and bears ripe seeds each year. What a pleasure it was when I discovered the first real *Trachycarpus „khasianus“* (= *T. martianus* „Khasia Hills“) offered for sale. After years of cultivation and care, it now stands at exactly 2.9 metres. It is so beautiful and perfect that it could compete with a tropical *Licuala grandis*.

Now, to my absolute favourite palm: a *Trachycarpus oreophilus* at a proud 1.9 metres. Marco Pfister from Banco (known from the EPS summer meeting) bought 500 *T. oreophilus* seeds from Tobias Spanner in 1998. Only a portion (around 40 seedlings) sprouted after several months. Then they began to ail and a few even died. I planted seven of

these poor things in a pot in my greenhouse (kept covered from March to November, then enclosed in bubble plastic). They recovered magnificently, so I bedded two of them out in a wind-protected, warm, half-shaded place in the garden. However, winter protection with wood pallets and bubble plastic is necessary here. In the spring, they are heavily fertilised. This is the recipe for gorgeous palms to thrive. All leaves are stiff and vertical and do not open to a full 360° circle but only to 90° as is often the case with *Trachycarpus martianus*. The contrast of the upper side of the leaf (dark green) to the under side (shimmering blue-green) is simply fabulous!

The largest *Trachycarpus latisectus* in my garden is exactly 1.4 metres high. *T. latisectus* are very sensitive when young and potted. Once planted out, they thrive under the same conditions as *Trachycarpus martianus*. Even when they grow perfectly, however, I never find them to be as beautiful and impressive as *T. martianus* or *T. oreophilus*. Of the real *T. nanas*, I now have three 20cm seedlings that have so far proven to be very sensitive. They are a bit yellowish and grow very slowly.

It has been my wish for many years to have the entire genus *Trachycarpus* in my palm collection. Through a Belgian man named Albert Reuten-Wijnaud of Riemst, my dream appears to have come true. In February 2004, I finally obtained seeds of *Trachycarpus princeps*, as well as *T. sp. Manipur*. Disappointed because I had not germinated any by October, I wanted to learn everything about *Trachycarpus princeps* and *T. sp. Manipur* on the Internet. I discovered that it was absolutely normal for these seeds to require up to two years or more to germinate (if they germinate!).

The nook behind the house, planted with large *Dicksonia antarctica* in a moss bed, lets us travel back in time to bygone ages. *Impatiens* provide



colour dabs set in green, lush moss, and various orchids adorn the black stem of the tree ferns. The *Dicksonia* thrive so well here that, in July, the roots start to grow on the entire stem. The new, rust-red, small, glass-like roots thicken the tree fern each year. Six years ago, a *Dicksonia* with a 60cm stem was thrown out by a nursery when they believed it to be dead after a very cold winter. Since I know that *Dicksonia* can survive up to nine months without growth, I planted it in my garden. A month later, many small leaves could already be seen. In the year after that, it became clear that the plants had developed three new crowns. All of them continued to grow. Will this occur more often? Perhaps it was a result of frost damage to the bud?

There are many other palms growing in my garden. I really find the combination of *Chamaerops humilis* „Vulcano“ and *C. humilis* var. *cerifera* with other, cold-tolerant palms such as *Jubaea*, *Sabal minor*, *Tritrinax campestris* and *Chamaedorea radicalis*, to be more exciting than all the city parks on the Mediterranean with their hundreds of *Phoenix* and *Washingtonia*.

Here is some general advice on the care of sensitive palms such as *Trachycarpus latisectus*, *T. takil*, *T. nanus*, *T. martianus*, and *T. oreophilus*, especially for young plants of these species:

1. Prune the leaves only when they are completely dead, so that the plant is not unnecessarily stressed and holds more green leaves.

2. Remove the grass from around the stem of all palms that stand on lawns, at least in the area of the tree's crown. I cover the bare soil with 2-3cm of pebbles so that no weeds grow at the base of the stem and over the roots. Early in the spring, I add a slow-release fertiliser (*Osmocote Exact*) between the pebbles. I find that while the lawn must be regularly watered, many palms do not like to be wet at the base of the trunk that often. Fungal infections and stem decay, as often inflict *Brahea armata*, are

prevented to a great degree in this way.

Some time ago, I began planting a hillside acquired a few years ago in front of my house. It is very steep but a sunny spot. It was necessary to brace the embankment with walls and lay paths (it was back-breaking work). However, it was worth it. I was very successful here with *Butia eriospata* and *Trachycarpus takil* planted on the hillside. In addition, this spring I planted *Sabal bermuda*, *Sabal x texensis*, *Phoenix theophrastii*, *Trachycarpus martianus*, *T. latisectus* and *T. wagnerianus*. Next spring, I will plant a large *Dasyllirion* and a few other plants. Since *Jubaea* seedlings in a pot are always problematic, I wanted to know how they would behave if I planted them outdoors straight away each year. Amazingly, there were no problems, no fungal infections, no spots - nothing.

By the way, I also rent a holiday home, ideal for two people. Anyone desiring a wonderful and inexpensive holiday in Switzerland can learn more by sending me an e-mail to:

*jean-claude.vonlanthen@bluewin.ch* or calling 0041-91-6053902



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*Top left: Trachycarpus oreophilus, maturing slowly but surely.*

*Top right: A robust Trachycarpus takil, obviously doing well.*

*Bottom left: Trachycarpus wagnerianus holds its robust leaves for a long time.*

*Bottom right: My largest Trachycarpus wagnerianus.*

*Photos by Fredy Ruethemann*

*See article on page 9.*

# Pests on Palms

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By *Andreas Kortekamp, Maxburgstr. 24, D-76829 Landau i.d. Pfalz, Germany.*  
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I guess you know the problem: If you grow palms at home on the window sill or outside in your garden, sooner or later (rather sooner!) you can find some of the typical enemies nibbling at your beloved plants: thrips, scale insects, white flies, maybe caterpillars of different insects, and spider mites. These pests may cause severe damage to palms if not treated with an appropriate pesticide. But what are appropriate pesticides? Maybe you have tested different products, chemicals, household remedies or commercial products. So did I! Some of them worked fine, others did not. Let me tell you what happened with my palms before and after treatment. Since insects and mites represent the most unpleasant pests on my palms, I will deal with these domestic animals primarily.

A long time ago I introduced a nasty insect myself with some contaminated soil. It is the sciarid fly. According to the literature its larvae mainly feed on organic matter in the soil and therefore plays an important role in decomposing plant debris. Unfortunately, the larvae also invade palm seeds and feel very happy in or on the emerging roots of seedlings. During the last year, cuttings of my oleander plants failed to root due to larval invasion of the root collars. Sticky yellow plastic sheets, placed between the plants, may help to catch the adult insects, and may thus lead to a lowered reproduction, but these sheets don't work against larvae in the soil. If new seeds were placed into contaminated soil or if flies were able to migrate from one pot to the other, germination rates of palm seeds decreased markedly. The soil I now use for seeds was decontaminated at 120 °C for 1 hour in the oven (even though my wife doesn't feel happy about the resulting special odour in our kitchen!). Pots with seeds should be separated from

other plants until the young seedlings are out of danger. Older plants seem to be resistant against larvae of the sciarid fly, or have such an extensive root mass that the damage caused by this insect doesn't matter.

Another insect feeding on my self-collected palm seeds (I took them from botanical gardens with permission) are powderpost beetles (Bostrychidae). They look like bark beetles but can be distinguished by their head projecting downwards. Since these beetles like sugars and starch, they are sometimes found in the meaty seeds of palms and other plants that have fallen from the tree at maturity and have been lying on the ground for some time. The presence of these beetles in infected seeds can be easily seen because they leave a penetration hole and a brown powder that represents the digested part of the infested seeds. Collecting of seeds still hanging on the trees instead of collecting them from the ground seems to be advisable. Alternatively, seeds can be treated with hot water (up to 80°C) for a few minutes (15 to 30 min) to kill the eggs or larvae adhering to the seeds and to stimulate germination. Even though this cannot be done with all seeds, I have observed no negative effect from this treatment on the germination of seeds from the following species: *Brahea armata*, *B. edulis*, *Butia capitata*, *B. yatay*, *Caryota mitis*, *Livistona australis*, *L. chinensis*, *L. humilis*, *Acoelorrhaphe wrightii*, *Phoenix canariensis*, *Sabal minor*, *S. palmetto*, *Serenoa repens*, *Trachycarpus fortunei*, *Washingtonia filifera* and *W. robusta*.

The major pest on my indoor palms, especially in the dry air during winter when relative humidity is low due to heating, is doubtlessly the red spider mite. It lives in colonies and spins a fine net that can be easily seen by spraying the plants with a fine mist of water. Furthermore, a characteristic mottling of the leaves indicates their feeding. Later on, leaves turn yellow at first and soon become

brown and die. Urgency is now in order or you could lose the entire plant. *Chamaedorea elegans*, *Caryota* sp., *Livistona chinensis*, *L. australis*, and *Syagrus romanzoffiana* seem to be very susceptible. Unfortunately, if these palms grow in a greenhouse, winter garden or as ornamental indoor plants, they cannot be sprayed with pesticides during the winter period due to health risks. The palms may become damaged when they are treated outside at temperatures near to or below 0°C. In some books, you may find information suggesting that spraying indoor plants several times with pure water decreases infestation with spider mites. I did not observe this effect. It is important not to use alkaline water for spraying since white spots of lime remain on the leaves causing an unpleasant appearance. This may also result in a decreased rate of photosynthesis.

Another recommendation I've read is to put a plastic bag around the plant to increase humidity for two or three days. Unfortunately, my palms didn't like that and the mites still remained alive. Therefore, I did some tests with the systemic acting compound Imidacloprid which is sold here as Confidor or Lizetan. In Lizetan the active component is combined with a fertilizer and used as sticks that have to be inserted into the pot. Since the active component is taken up very slowly into the plant, the curative effect may take some days or even weeks. You have to wait a longer period of time until all mites acquire a lethal dosage. I observed that Confidor, applied as a solution of 40 mg per litre to the soil, works much faster and is even cheaper compared to Lizetan, which is also available as a white resin or a spray (very expensive). Although there is a delay between application and effect, the active component is taken up systemically, protecting the entire plant for several weeks including the emerging leaves. Especially when applied as a spray (but also in the case of solutions added to the soil) you have to take care to avoid overdose. Wait at least two to three or even better four weeks between two treatments. I observed phytotoxic (poisonous for plants) effects when applied too frequently. *Washingtonia filifera* and *W. robusta* seem to be very sensitive.

The miticidal compound Abamectin is a na-

tural substance that is toxic to mites and insects. It is quite safe due to a low toxicity to mammals and is thus used to control insect and mite pests of ornamental plants such as palms in the greenhouse; however, many insects and mites developed resistance. The use is therefore restricted. I tested another product (Kiron) that is effective either when applied directly to the insects or to the upper leaf side, since it can penetrate into the leaf. On my palms, Kiron did its job for several months and also inhibited colonization of the plant with the next mite generation, adhering to the leaves as eggs.

Another insect feeding on my palms is the scale insect. If palms are not attacked by spider mites, scales will fit into this niche. I tested some plant oils and soap with ethanol. These products should work by sealing off the insect's air supply. The former should build up a more or less thin layer of oil through which air cannot diffuse, whereas the latter decreases the surface tension of water. This leads to an intrusion of water or ethanol, respectively, into the insect. But these compounds are sometimes phytotoxic to palms and have to be applied several times. After a second treatment leaves got several yellow spots and my *Hyophorbe verschaffeltii*, for example, lost most of its leaves. Therefore, I tested some insecticides based on pyrethroids (synthetic analogs of pyrethrum). These products worked very well. Fortunately, scale insects do not multiply as rapidly as spider mites do, so you can wait some days or even weeks until the weather outside is favourable for chemical treatments. Alternatively, you can also add the good old Confidor.

Keep in mind that insects may develop resistance if you always use the same active compound. It is better to change the product in order to avoid insecticide resistance. Scale insects on small palms or single palm leaves can also be removed by cleaning the leaves with a mixture of water and a drop of a commercial detergent and perhaps a small amount of ethanol (5 %).

Of course, our main objective is to achieve big and healthy plants. Nevertheless, we should keep the use of pesticides at a minimum in order to reduce hazards to humans, animals, and the envi-

ronment. Until now, I haven't read anything about repellents, feeding inhibitors, and other biologically active chemicals, except for an extract of the seed of the neem tree, which seems to act as a feeding inhibitor. I have not tested it so far. Interestingly, my *Brahea armata* palms seem to have their own biological control mechanism. They never showed any symptoms of damage or infection. This may be a consequence of the waxy layer on both sides of the leaves. Some plants are also known to contain bioactive compounds in the leaf wax that act against a wide range of organisms.

Who has had success with other ways of keeping their palms and other exotics free of pests and diseases? I hope you will let *Chamaerops* readers know how they worked. We all want to learn more about caring for our precious palms.



*...continued from page 22:*

## *Potted Palms in the Peak District*

the wet and cold. For further protection I spray the crowns with a fungicide. In August/September the palms are treated to a high-potash feed with the hope that this will make them more resilient to

fight the winter cold and wet. On warm days the palms are released from their tents and the fleece is taken into the bungalow to be aired. The two beautiful *Brahea armata* stay out in the garden all winter happily enveloped in their tents.

The local bird population appear to appreciate the palms and can often be seen sheltering under the palmate leaves, or in the case of the Coal Tits, planting seeds in the fibre of the *Trachycarpus* so that in the spring a bizarre variety of seedlings sprout from the trunks. During nesting time someone should tell these birds that the fibre is firmly attached to the trunks and no amount of tugging will release it to provide nest linings, although it appears there is no harm in trying; even the local crows have had a go. I have just telephoned The Palm Centre to order two palms for the new year and to take advantage of their winter sale! As snow lies on the ground I can only dream of summer days when to sit at the table beneath a palm tree with a good book is a pleasure indeed.




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*Top left: Seeds of *Livistona* infected with powder-post beetles. Each seed exhibits an exit hole.*

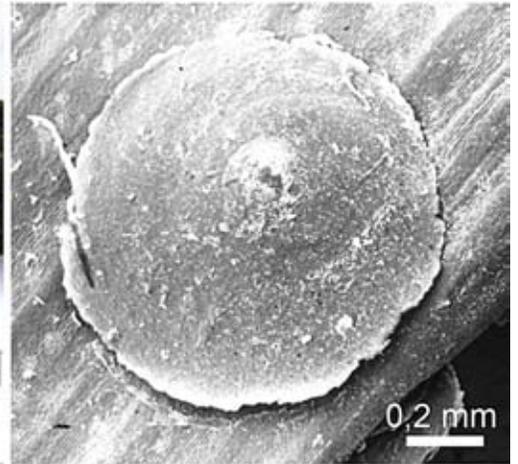
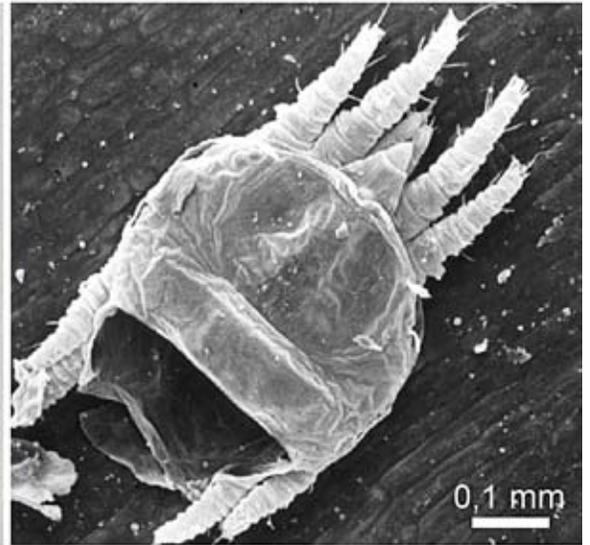
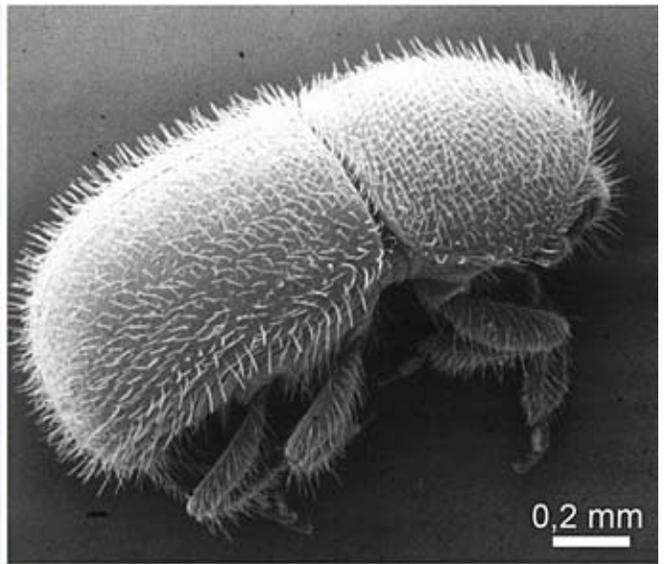
*Top right: Micrograph of a powderpost beetle*

*Centre left: Infested *Caryota* leaves showing brown and chlorotic areas due to feeding of spider mites*

*Centre right: Left remnant of a spider mite.*

*Bottom left and bottom right: Leaflet of *Sabal palmetto* with scale insects and a micrograph of such a scale insect (*Diaspididae*) on the same leaflet.*

*Photos by Andreas Kortekamp*



# Palms from Seed – A Beginner's Experience

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By Lucian Morris 33, Trafalgar Drive, Flitwick, Bedfordshire, MK45 1EF, U.K. [lucianmorris@hotmail.com](mailto:lucianmorris@hotmail.com)

I have been the proud owner of a (very) pot-bound *Trachycarpus fortunei* for about three years, but it wasn't until my wife and I moved to a more permanent location last December that I became seriously interested in palms. In the spring I planted my *T. fortunei* and a *Chamaerops humilis* that I acquired at the famous (well, it's famous if you live in London) Columbia Road Flower Market. Both of these palms now reside in a flowerbed in my south-facing front garden. Neither is huge but both have grown well this year.

Watching these two palms go from strength to strength got me into thinking that perhaps I could do with a few more. I started to look about but decided that to buy all the palms I wanted would cost me a fortune. The only alternative was to grow them myself. I set about acquiring seeds in earnest with the goal of growing palms that should survive outside (I know that some of the below are borderline in southern England).

After doing some meticulous research (much of which came from germination comments on the [rarepalmseeds.com](http://rarepalmseeds.com) website) I opted to use a 'peat + vermiculite in a baggie' method for germination. Essentially, you mix the ingredients and fill in a zip lock baggie and add enough water to make the mix just moist. The seeds are first soaked for a day or two in tap water and are then added to the mix and placed in a suitable germination location (see species by species descriptions).

Once seeds have germinated they are moved to a 'Root Trainers' potting tray where they can be

individually potted in tall slim 'pots'. The media used here is peat and gravel to allow for good drainage. I would recommend 'Root Trainers' style potting trays to anyone (they aren't paying me for this, honestly!).

I got hold of, and set about germinating, the following seeds:

Phoenix spp.

Of the Phoenix species the easiest to get hold of was *P. dactylifera*. On a visit to my parents I retrieved the stones of dates they had been eating. The seeds were cleaned off by soaking the seed and then rubbing them with tissue paper. I also purchased Phoenix *roebelenii* (Mekong) and Phoenix *theophrastii*. The *P. roebelenii* and *P. dactylifera* were put in the airing cupboard (where the hot water tank resides) which is fairly constantly in the high twenties Celsius. It is worth noting that the airing cupboard is completely dark 99% of the time. With *P. theophrastii* being a more 'temperate' palm (from Crete), I reasoned it would germinate at a lower temperature and so left the seeds on a bookcase at about 18° Celsius. Each of these species proved to be moderately successful. Germination rates were not high but were sufficient for me to get a few healthy seedlings from 10 or so seeds. Germination took from two weeks to three months.

*Trachycarpus* spp.

Of the *Trachycarpus* species, I tried *T. fortunei*, *T. latisectus* and *T. wagnerianus*. Each species had its own germination bag and was left at room temperature (about 18° Celsius) to germinate. *T. fortunei* has proved to be incredibly successful with almost 100% germination. *T. latisectus* proved less so with about 40% and *T. wagnerianus* only produced 20% germination. Looking at the seed I believe that the *T. wagnerianus* may have been

over-cleaned and the kernel was supplied without any form of seed coating. This probably contributed heavily to the mass rotting that occurred. I later lost the two seedlings, I suspect, to rot after potting on to the seedling tray. Germination took from two weeks to three months.

#### *Butia* spp.

Of the *Butias*, I tried my hand at *B. paraguayensis* and *B. eriospatha*. Both species were placed into the airing cupboard. I made one very large mistake with the *B. paraguayensis* seeds by throwing away the 'duds' too soon. After getting three seeds to germinate (out of 10) and then nothing, I assumed that the remaining seeds weren't viable and binned them. Watching the *B. eriospatha* continue to germinate sporadically for the last six months has confirmed what an idiot I was. The *B. eriospatha* is currently at 40% germination and rising.

#### *Chamaerops humilis* var. *cerifera*

The *Chamaerops humilis* var. *cerifera* seeds were germinated at room temperature alongside my *Trachycarpus* species. These seeds have proven almost as successful and I had about an 80% germination rate over the course of about six weeks.

#### *Yucca rostrata*

*Yucca rostrata* was germinated in the airing cupboard. This species appears to be a prolific germinator. From 10 seeds I initially got, I believe, 12 germinations (I suspect I got some bonus seeds in the packet) all in the space of about four weeks.

#### *Cycas panzihuaensis*

I have recently acquired four seeds of *Cycas panzihuaensis* from Chiltern Seeds in the UK. I am really excited about these cycads as, legend has it, they may be hardy in the UK. Again, I have used the baggie method in an airing cupboard and so far I have one seedling and another seed has split. This has taken less than one month from sowing. I reckon that in a few years these prehistoric beasts should look great, sitting amongst some palms.

#### *Musa sikkimensis*

I tried this banana in a heated propagator next to a north-facing window. I used the same mix as

for the palms and can confidently state that I got 0% germination. That's right, nothing happened. I am unsure as to whether I will try to germinate a banana again as I only really want one plant. I may just buy a young plant and try to forget my germination woes.

#### Moving On.....

I am now about eight months down the line from first starting my germination efforts and have in the region of 40 plants. I think that I have spent about £100 in the process – more than half of which went on seeds. I need to point out that I have lost a number of seedlings, principally Phoenix species, over the intervening period which I suspect is either down to watering, lighting (not sure which) or planting depth (at least one seedling was planted too low). However, I still have enough of most species to make me pretty confident that I will have enough palms for my purposes and perhaps a few to sell on.

Many of the palms are now growing their second leaf and beginning to look a bit more like palms and a bit less like thick leaf blades. I am hoping that by next summer I will have three leaf seedlings and I will then start to look at moving them outside.

Recently I have been forced to move my seedlings, as my young son becomes more mobile. The new location is pretty dark and I am investigating ways in which I can resolve this. To that end I have now purchased a propagating lighting kit to suspend over the seedlings and my experiments in this area may become the subject of a later article.



# Timaru Revisited

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*C.S. Jackson, 64 The Ridgeway, Westcliffe on Sea, Essex S50 8NU, U.K.*

On the sad occasion of my father's sudden and unexpected death in September this year, I found myself in Temuka, South Canterbury, New Zealand, for his funeral. Even though it was only a week-long visit home from the U.K., it was still very interesting for me to take note of the late winter conditions prevailing while I was there. My father was the gentleman who spent many hours collecting the now well known seeds of Phoenix canariensis, 'Timaru' from the large trees in and around Timaru's Caroline bay. He would then clean them, dry them and send them to me here in the U.K. for me to distribute around the U.K. and the world. The weather conditions whilst in South Canterbury were enlightening and gave a further boost to my opinion of how hardy the Phoenix palms from this part of New Zealand really are.

Temuka is a small town just 10 miles north of Timaru on the main north/south highway and is about 5 miles inland from the coast. It supports some really quite impressive specimens of Phoenix canariensis, both large and small. At the time of my visit they were all looking healthy but yellowed from the cold of a particularly harsh winter New Zealand experienced in 2004. Even Auckland experienced serious frost and Christchurch was under snow for two days. Even in late winter (early September) I found the nights to be absolutely bitter. The first two nights I was there, the temperature plunged down to -4°C with accompanying hard frost. The remaining nights of my visit were somewhat milder, thankfully. I remarked to my mother that I had forgotten how cold the nights could be there. The day time, on the other hand, was sunny and reasonably warm (approximately 15°C) but as soon as the sun set, down came a very heavy dew, the temperature dropped and everything frosted up. It was very interesting to experience how harsh

the New Zealand climate can be with huge swings in temperature in a period of just 24 hours.

Our winter climate in the U.K. does not seem to have these major swings in temperature in winter but stays more even, though lower down the temperature scale in daytime. Nevertheless, these Phoenix palms have no trouble tolerating these large changes in temperature in Temuka/Timaru. One mitigating factor, I suppose, is the relatively dry cold, though it is relentless in South Canterbury's winter with 40-50 frosts recorded each season. It is no wonder that the palms are somewhat jaundiced, but, thankfully, they turn fully green again in the summer sunshine.

I discovered, whilst there, that more exotic palms are now being sold to customers from New Zealand's South Island. In the past the only palms ever grown there were Trachycarpus fortunei, Phoenix canariensis and, rarely, Chamaerops humilis. Even the native Nikau palm was unavailable for purchase by the ordinary gardener. So I was very pleased to hear about a nursery near Christchurch specializing in all sorts of exotic plants. On the way to the airport on my last day, I made a detour to see this nursery -Texture Plants. I was very impressed and the selection was good, with Butia, Jubaea, Trachycarpus, Nikau, Chamaerops and Phoenix available. I decided to purchase a small Butia capitata to give to my brother to take back to plant in my dad's garden in memory of him and his seed collecting efforts. No doubt, it is the only Butia planted in Temuka but let's hope that it will not stay the only one for long.



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*Inflorescences on Trachycarpus fortunei.*  
*Photo by Keith Salt.*  
*See article on page 20.*



# Potted Palms in the Peak District

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By Paula Salt, Leek, Staffordshire

The market town of Leek is in North Staffordshire on the edge of the Peak District. It stands around 200 metres above sea level and is approximately 35 miles from the coast. My garden is small and has a northerly aspect, but fortunately the bungalow does not cast too much shade. I have liked unusual plants since childhood, especially those with big tropical-looking foliage and also bamboo. Buying the bungalow in 1991 and having a garden to myself was an opportunity to experiment and grow anything that my heart desired!

In 1995, my interest in bamboo was fading and I was exhausted by their take-over bid for our garden and that belonging to next-door. At that point I noticed a small *Trachycarpus fortunei* that I must have bought with my first plants four years before. It was growing in almost pure clay and partial shade, but it was thriving and looked beautiful. This gave me inspiration. The *Trachycarpus* fit in well with the figs, *Fatsia japonica* and vines that I had recently started to grow, but it was far more tropical and endearing.

Finding a supply of palms was difficult, so initially I had only *Trachycarpus fortunei* and *Chamaerops humilis*, although this did give me time to read about their needs and prepare the garden. A small local nursery had some fine *Trachycarpus* and one in particular stood alone: its large leathery leaves hung in a haphazard fashion and it had a strong, fuzzy, matted trunk. I was in love! My enquiries found that it was not for sale. Several months later we visited again, and although the large *Trachycarpus* was still there, its health appeared to be failing, and it was still not for sale. Again we visited and this time discovered that the nursery

was closing down; therefore, I was able to purchase a good-sized *Trachycarpus* for £35 [incredible!]. Better still, the big *Trachycarpus* was still there, now in a poly-tunnel looking sick with its leaves at an even more haphazard angle. I made an offer, it was accepted and I rushed home for the money. A few days later the *Trachycarpus* arrived in an old truck. I tried for over twelve months to restore the poor tree back to health, but unfortunately he faded away. I was so upset that no other tree can replace my first ever, big *Trachycarpus* [Boris]; he was responsible for my love of palms.

I try to think before purchasing a palm for on several occasions I have said 'I must have that!' only to discover that it will not fit in our Peugeot 106. Another problem is finding pots large enough to house the palms, then their transportation and potting up. One sunny April day we decided it was time to re-pot our largest *Trachycarpus Fortunei*, named 'Bo.' I believed that I had planned this with military precision:

1. I had found a suitable 42-inch terracotta pot, paid for it and arranged delivery plus the use of two men to lift the tree in. The pot arrived a day early whilst there was no one at home and it was left on the drive.
2. I had measured the pot and the gate and I was sure it would fit through, but I was wrong. So, after taking off the gate and removing the gatepost, we gently rolled the pot through and into position.
3. The broken crocks were put in for drainage and five bags of compost were added.
4. Now how to get the *Trachycarpus* out of the old pot and into the new without our helpers? For-

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*Inflorescences developing on Trachycarpus fortunei.*  
*Bottom left: The Salt Garden with a light dusting of snow.*  
*Photos by Keith Salt.*



tunately one of the local nurseries was picking up the remaining bamboo that I had taken out of the garden and, just as despair was setting in, a truck pulled up containing a vast gentleman standing at least six feet five inches tall; he looked tough and had a long, slicked back pony-tail to prove it! ,Dare we ask this gentleman for help,‘ we wondered? Kevin turned out to be a huge help.

5. I smashed off the old pot and when doing so a bit flew and chipped the new pot. It was fortunate that we had company at that point so tears and shouting were avoided!

6. Using a blanket and rope and Kevin’s kindness and immense strength we managed to move the palm into position. It looked magnificent! But when I suggested a slight adjustment in position Kevin declined and made a hasty getaway clutching the £20 my husband had given him.

7. Before the last bamboo left the garden, a golden cane, its stripes glinting in the sunlight, smashed one of the security lights.

8. Time for a stiff drink, I think!

Since finding The Palm Centre in 2001, my palm collection has grown to include:

*Trachycarpus fortunei*, the Chusan Palm, which is always reliable.

*Trachycarpus takil*, the Kumaon Palm, from the Himalayas.

*Jubaea chilensis*, the Chilean Wine Palm, has grown well this year. Then we tried to move the pot to put it inside for the winter and we discovered that it had anchored itself into the ground with a very large root.

*Butia Capitata*, the Jelly Palm, has grown well, though perhaps too well: when putting it away for the winter, a wheel on my trolley buckled under the weight.

*Chamaerops humilis var. cerifera* is very disappointing and has put on little growth.

*Chamaerops humilis* ,*Vulcano*‘ has grown well, even a very squashed poorly specimen that we rescued from a garden centre. I love the lush green leaf and close growth habit of the ,*Vulcano*‘.

*Brahea armata* is particularly slow growing, only producing three leaves this year, but then the weather was not good; it seems to have never stopped raining. The Brahea were bought locally

and have smaller and very pale silver leaves whereas its partner has larger and darker silver leaves.

*Rhapidophyllum hystrix*, the Needle Palm, is growing well.

*Trachycarpus latisectus*, the Windamere Palm. My husband purchased this as a Christmas present for me in 2004. It is only 65cm high but I hope that it will survive in its new and more hostile environment.

*Trithrinax campestris* is one of my favourites, but it is armed and spikes both the dogs and me when we walk past. Many of my palms are small mainly because my salary as a nurse does not cover the cost of the larger palms that I crave and also because I want to support my other love, handbags, although these are easier to buy and sneak into the house without my husband knowing.

## Winter Care and Protection

The wind, exposure and the cold are problems here, but as shelter from the hedge and other planting has increased, a good microclimate has developed. The Beech and Holly hedge slow the wind and a clump of *Phyllostachys nigra* further minimise its effect. A large *Magnolia grandiflora* ,*Gallissoniere*‘ protects the palms from the east wind that had been a problem at the bottom of the garden. The *Trachycarpus fortunei* stay out all winter without protection, but the *Trachycarpus takil* gets a horticultural fleece cover as it is still young. In December the *Jubaea chilensis* along with the *Butia capitata*, *Trithrinax campestris* and the smallest *Chamaerops humilis* ,*Vulcano*‘ move into the garage to share it with our two guinea pigs, Commander Tomalok and Ambassador Sarek (a.k.a. Colin and Lucky) who then enjoy the tropical outlook. The car lives on the drive.

The palms that stay out that are not so hardy as the *Trachycarpus* have protective tents made from canes and horticultural fleece. The air seems to circulate in these and provides some protection from

*Continued on page 14...*

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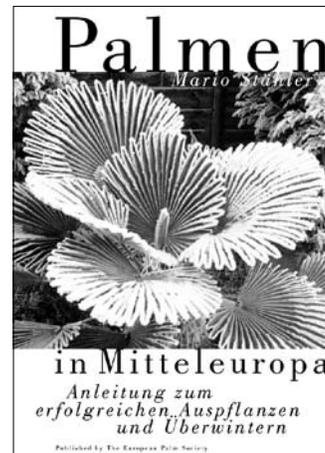
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