

Chamaerops

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Completely Hardy

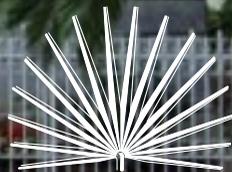
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Cover: Twin Jubaeas frame the town hall of Rivesaltes in the south of France.



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c/o The Palm Centre Phone: +44 20 8255 6191
Ham Central Nursery Fax: +44 20 8255 6192
Ham Street, Ham E-mail: mail@palmssociety.org
Richmond, Surrey, TW10 7HA, UK Website: www.palmssociety.org

Editorial

• *Martin Gibbons, E-ditor, martin@palmsociety.org*

The year is rushing by, not so many weeks before it's over and we're in 2001. Who ever would have imagined it? However, we have winter to get through first and I for one am gambling on the continuation of the lucky streak we (at least in the UK) have been having for 10 or 11 years now. We haven't had a severe winter since then, and each autumn I pray for 'just one more mild winter. Please?' Evidence that it has been a long time since we had a 'decent' winter can be seen all across London. *Cordyline australis*, which will be killed by a hard frost, can be seen in enormous sizes across and around the capital. After a bad winter these plants, which, at 8-10 feet are starting to get 'interesting' are reduced to stumps, only to begin the cycle again, from suckers, which are put up in great numbers in the spring. Should you be unlucky enough to have this happen to you, don't be tempted to leave them all in place (there may be 15 or 20), or you will end up with a shapeless mass of shoots. Instead, choose the biggest and strongest, and remove the rest. With all the energy from the huge root ball that would have been supporting the parent plant, the lucky seedling will grow so fast it will make you head spin. With adequate watering, some good soil and the judicious application of fertilizer, within a very few years it will be back where it was.

Much has been written (not least in *Chamaerops*) over the years about protection of palms, and other exotics over the winter. But how to find it? Well, there is a way. If you have opted for on-line membership, you can browse all our back issues (well, many of them. More are being added all the time) using key words. Type in the word 'snow' for example and all mentions of this word in all these back issues will be brought up on the screen for you to examine further. Or try 'shelter', 'winter protection' or even 'fleece' and you will be able to find everything that has been written on these subjects since the European Palm Society began.

Due to the enormous amount of work done by Toby and Rudolph Spanner, we are soon going to be back on track, and they are to be complimented. As it happens we have a good number of articles on hand at the moment, and I would like to thank all those who contribute to our magazine, regularly or intermittently. Would you perhaps like to write but don't know a subject? Here's a few suggestions to inspire you.

Interviews are really popular. Do you know a palm nut? Sit down for half an hour and chat to him (or her) about the things you would most like to know. Chances are, they're the kind of things that other members would like to know also. Tape the interview and simply type it later. The interviewee does not have to be well-known. Ordinary people often have the most interesting stories to tell.

Could you organize a quiz? The one we had before was very successful. How well do you know your palms and other exotics? Could you set 20 questions? Maybe you're a crossword fanatic. Could you design your own? Let us have it for *Chamaerops*.

Got a favourite palm book? Could you write 600 words (about the length of this Editorial) about it. Or 300? Get down who wrote it, how much it cost and what you think about it. Or maybe you've come across one that you hate, or that is 'replete with errors'. Write about that one too. There are so many palm books about these days, a bit of guidance would go a long way.

Well, there's a few ideas to get you started. You could also write about favourite palms (up close and personal!), Botanic Gardens, where to see spectacular species, lesser known hardy palms, palm pests – a short series maybe.

The important thing is that you write something. Most people have a story in them and it's highly likely that our members would be interested in yours!

Enjoy this issue; it was written by people like you!



Palm Trees of Lake Geneva

by Nicolas Eracle, Route de Brent 30, 1817 Brent/Montreux, Switzerland

I've been a member of the EPS for one year, and my passion for palm trees only grows. This is why I would like to present to you the area of Lake Geneva, where I reside, and where beautiful specimens of palm trees can be seen. Climatically, aside from the Ticino, south of the Alps, our area is the most privileged in Switzerland. The basin of Lake Geneva benefits from hot and sunny summers; in fact, Geneva is the sunniest city in Switzerland between May and September. The winters are often calm with little wind. On the downside, when fog sets in, it can last for many weeks, especially on the west half of the lake. This dull weather makes everything seem a little sad. Under this gray cover, however, the lake is able to retain the heat energy accumulated in the summer, and the temperature remains constant, just above zero. The springs and the autumns are often wet, but this is not an absolute rule. The average annual minimum in the area is between -8°C and -10°C depending on the location, which places us in zone 8. One notable exception was in 1985, when the temperature fell to -17°C on the edges of the lake.

As a child in Geneva, I liked to walk outside the city to admire the gardens. One day, I fell nose to nose with two superb *Trachycarpus fortunei* that were approximately 5 meters high. The passion was born! From that day on, my dream was to have my own house, a garden...and palm trees! Unfortunately, although there are beautiful *Trachycarpus fortunei* in Geneva, they are very rare, which is unfortunate as the climate is favorable for them. Lack of knowledge about the ability of many palms to resist cold makes people hesitant to plant them outside; let's hope that certain courageous people will show the way!

To see the many palm trees around lake Geneva, one must travel to Montreux, a city that

is located close to the east end of the lake. For decades Montreux has been making enormous efforts to increase its tourism and spread its image of a green city, with many species and a benign climate. The palm trees are part of that image here. The area is called the Swiss Riviera. Many *Trachycarpus fortunei* are planted on the edges of the lake and along the streets. They are also frequently seen in private gardens. There are also some nice *Chamaerops* and *Butia*. Recently two *Brahea armata*, two *Washingtonia filifera*, and a *Trithrinax campestris* were planted on the walk bordering the lake. Lovers of other plants will not be disappointed either, as *Mimosas* (*Acacia delbata*), olive-trees, pomegranates and rose bays may also be seen here, as well as the *Musa basjoo*.

In 1998, I had the chance to build my house on the edge of Montreux; my childhood dream had come true. My enthusiasm for palms being so great, I already saw the garden filled with them -and only them. However, after long debates with my wife, I agreed to plant more than palms alone in the garden. Like any beginner, I started by making errors. The first one was to plant a *Trachycarpus* of 60cm, a *Butia* of 70cm, and a *Jubaea* of 120cm that I had bought a few years before in Ticino, in October. Additionally, with compact soil that drained poorly and holes hardly larger than the pots, I really didn't have much chance. To cap it all, the winter of 1998-99 was the coldest in 13 years, with two days at -11°C right after a period of strong rain and snow. The *Butia* and the *Jubaea* rotted slowly in the spring of 1999. It made me regret my poorly thought out plantings bitterly. Fortunately, the *Trachycarpus* withstood this bad treatment without any problem, and I replanted it in a larger hole in the spring. I'd learned my first rule: plant

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The Cretan Date Palm

by Thomas Boeuf, Hauptstr. 6, 63796 Kahl am Main, Germany

Crete has a very special kind of beauty due to its many different types of landscapes: high mountains, deep gorges, deserted caverns, fertile soil, and rugged coasts. Crete's vegetation is very rich, and the climate is mild. Situated at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa, this island is influenced by all these cultures. From Europe it got its cosmopolitan flair, from Asia its tradition, and from Africa the Sirocco...and the palms!

In relation to the size of the island, the usable land is comparatively small. Despite this, many types of fruits, vegetables, and spices grow. Deep in the gorges of Crete rare varieties of fauna and flora exist, many of which can only be found on Crete. The most important species, *Phoenix theophrastii*, was named by the Swiss botanist Werner Greuter in 1938, for the Greek scholar Theophrast (371-287 bc.), who is said to be the founder of botanical science.

It is said that after the successful conquest of the island in 825, the Sarabene Abu Hafis Omar landed on the beach of Vai, situated on the East Coast of Crete. Following Arab tradition, they ate dates and spat out the stones on the beach. Since the time this took place, a grove of palms has grown up and has given this spot a romantic aura. In reality these date palms belong to a species that exclusively grows on Crete and a few spots on the southern coast of Turkey. Although closely related to the true date palm, *Phoenix dactylifera*, its fruits are small and not really edible. They might be relicts from the tertiary and much older than the legend of Abu Hafis Omar. Nowadays the beach of Vai is a national park and is open to the public only in high season and other special times.

When I was flying to Crete with Friends in

< *Trachycarpus fortunei* (see previous page)

October, I had in my mind a trip to the palm beach of Vai to write an article for *Chamaerops*. Some years before I had been to Vai, and according to the guide, there were some other places with palms growing in the wild. So, I thought about finding these and other unknown places, especially as the eastern cape of Crete is described in many books as the only place where *Phoenix theophrastii* grow in the wild.

After innumerable inquiries, I was given a tip by an old Greek fisherman. One of the few rivers of Crete flows into the Libyan Sea. The fisherman told me that this place is not easy to reach, and therefore only a few tourists are able to visit it from seaside. This fact raised my interest. The next day we rented a car and started the search. After several kilometers on un-surfaced roads, the giant mountains gave way to a sight of a frugal riverbed of incredible beauty. A few moments later we recognized the glittering of the Libyan Sea. We parked our car and walked to the seafront. From there the canyon could not yet be seen, but the groups of palms which grew close together along the river could. From this place, a dangerous path went down the cliff in serpentines and we needed almost an hour to reach the canyon. A few people who seemed to have reached the beach with fishing boats lay in the sun and enjoyed the silence of the deserted beach. I began my exploration.

My first impression of this canyon was of an oasis in the hills of the Sinai peninsular. Within a range of 30m on both sides of the slowly flowing river were all sizes and forms of *Phoenix theophrastii*. Some were low and bushy, some had tall or bent trunks. At some places, the palms grew in such a close and tight way that it was

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Conservation through Cultivation

by Andrew Cartwright

I sometimes despair about the destruction of our Earth's beauty. Every year many different kinds of animals and plants become extinct. They will never be seen again. For many years I felt that all I could do to remedy this awful situation was to support the work of organizations concerned with conservation; but recently, I have begun to think that I may be able to play a more direct role in conservation.

Out of a total of about 2,750 species of palm, nearly a third are threatened with extinction in the wild (source: "1997 IUCN Red List of Threatened Plants" compiled by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre). Conservation of palms in the wild is largely dependent upon protection of the habitats in which most of these palms live. Despite the magnificent efforts of several organizations, such as Greenpeace, who are working hard to protect these habitats, the scale of the problem appears to be so large that it seems unlikely that these projects alone will be sufficient to prevent many species of palm from disappearing.

A few of the threatened species are well established in cultivation, and, although cultivation is not an ideal substitute for preserving a species in the wild, it is surely better than losing the species entirely. Unfortunately, many of those species threatened with extinction in the wild are rare, or even non-existent, in cultivation.

Whilst this is a gloomy picture, there does seem to be a precaution that we can take, rather like taking out an insurance policy. My reason for writing is to ask the membership what they

think of my proposal. It is possible to purchase plants or seeds of some of those palms that are both threatened with extinction in the wild and rare in cultivation. My hope is that by raising and caring for some of these, we, as amateur growers, may be able to help preserve them for future generations. Our action may not help to safeguard them from destruction in the wild, but, providing we buy from reputable sources, neither will we hasten their destruction.

Although conservation by amateur growers may not seem to be an ideal approach to the problem of saving palms from extinction, it does seem to be a way in which some species, which will probably become extinct in the wild, might be saved for future generations. Certainly, if a species is destroyed in the wild, every plant of that species which survives in the collections of amateurs will become more precious.

Unfortunately, the fact that a species is kept in botanical gardens is not sufficient to guarantee its survival. Genetic variety is important for the survival of a species because plants that are genetically identical are likely to be vulnerable to the same pests and diseases. It seems that variety is more likely to be maintained if the species is kept not only in botanical gardens but also in numerous small populations belonging to amateur growers. Also, there is a possibility that a species may become extinct and then, at a later date, an attempt may be made to reintroduce it into the wild. Successful reintroduction seems more likely if greater numbers of the species are available, and, once again, small populations kept by amateur growers may prove invaluable.

I do not know of an example of a palm that has been reintroduced to the wild; instead, I would like to refer readers to an article about a bird. See Tony Juniper's "Plan to bring Spix's macaw back from the brink" in BBC Wildlife magazine, October 2000. In 1990 there were only twelve Spix's macaws left - one in the wild and eleven in captivity. Since then a concerted effort has been made to conserve this species and a number have been bred. The first tentative steps have been taken to introduce captive birds into the wild, where, amazingly, the single bird remaining in 1990 has survived. The project has not yet succeeded, and may never do so, but it does illustrate the possible importance that palms kept in cultivation might have if their species becomes extinct, or nearly so, in the wild.

Conservation is a considerable challenge for an amateur grower. Pessimists quote a long list of problems facing the amateur grower, but I think it is wrong to allow pessimists to discourage us. Whilst it is true that an amateur grower will experience many problems, this is true of any worthwhile project, whether it be concerned with conservation of palms or anything else. Of course, the possibility of solving problems is an attraction for anyone with a positive outlook.

If, as enthusiasts, we can make a success of creating numerous small populations of threatened palms, then we might be able to encourage the wider public to participate. Every year, millions of people buy plants for their home or garden, including a few species of palms of which thousands are bought every year. Many gardeners raise plants from seed, though rarely palms. Most of this vast expenditure goes towards plants that are not threatened with extinction. If just a small amount of this expenditure could be diverted into caring for threatened palms, then this would further increase the chances of those species surviving. Of course, the principle could be extended to other types of plants, and for some suggestions as to which species might be suitable I refer the reader to "Trees in trouble: a new campaign to save world's rarest species," a sixteen page booklet issued free with the above

mentioned magazine.

If the members think my proposal is worth pursuing, then I would be willing to devote some of my time to compiling a database of amateur growers and the threatened species of palm which they hold, and which they would one day be willing to donate to a conservation program should the need arise.

For myself, when I buy palms in the future, I will be buying those threatened species that I believe I can successfully look after, and for which I can provide the conditions required by the species for reproduction. Although I am no expert I have drawn up a list of a few palms which seem suitable for cultivation in a cool temperate climate such as our own, or for cultivation indoors, and I would be very interested to have members' comments on the list. I have examples of two: a *Chamaedorea glaucifolia*, nearly 5ft tall, growing slowly but surely in my living room at a temperature of 70-80°F (21-27°C) and humidity of 65-75%. Excepting for midwinter, this plant grows all year round. I also have a newly germinated seedling of *Dypsis decipiens*.

Brabea aculeata (Aculeata palm, Sinaloa Hesper Palm): *B. aculeata* will grow in a sheltered garden in a cool temperate climate. It needs full sun and well-drained soil. It is also suitable for use indoors in a brightly-lit position. Single plants are capable of producing fertile seeds. Height: 5m (15ft) Width: 2.5m (8ft). Conservation status: vulnerable.

Brabea decumbens (Sierra Madre Palm): The leaves of *B. decumbens* are amongst the bluest found on any palm. It has a decumbent (underground) trunk and is slow growing. Its natural habitat is on exposed hills (in Mexico) so it may be suited to a cool temperate climate although this has not been proven. Indoors, it requires full sun, well-drained soil, and it may benefit from the addition of lime to the soil. Single plants are capable of producing fertile seeds. Height: 3m (10ft) Width: 2.5m (8ft). Conservation status: vulnerable.



Chamaedorea glaucifolia (Glaucous Parlour Palm): This species has a tall and narrow profile (trunk less than 3cm thick) and up to 40 leaflets on each leaf. It may grow to 5m but plants in cultivation are usually less tall. Requires shade and warm subtropical conditions to grow quickly, but will grow slowly indoors in less favourable conditions. Male and female plants are required for fertile seed production. Height: 5m (16ft) Width: 1.5m (4ft). Conservation status: endangered.

Chamaedorea hooperiana: This is a vigorous, clumping species and a native of Mexico. It requires shady conditions and moderate humidity, and is not suitable for outdoors. Male and female plants are required for fertile seed production. Height: 2m (6ft) Width: 1.5m (4ft). Conservation status: vulnerable.

Chamaedorea klotschiana: This is a small, compact, decorative plant from Mexico, with a slender trunk and a small, extended crown of arching leaves. It requires shade, and is not suitable for outdoors. Male and female plants are required for fertile seed production. Height: 2m (6ft) Width: 1.5m (4ft). Conservation status: rare.

Chamaedorea microspadix (Bamboo Palm): This clumping palm from Mexico is suitable for a sheltered garden, in a cool temperate climate, where a well-established plant will take a few degrees of frost. Requires shade and rich, well-drained soil, and tropical conditions to grow quickly. Male and female plants are required for fertile seed production. Height: 3m (10ft) Width: 1.5m (4ft). Conservation status: vulnerable.

Chamaedorea pumila (Pumila Palm): This dwarf species from Costa Rica has leaves that are leathery, dark grey-green, iridescent, and may be slightly mottled. It requires shade and is not suitable for outdoors. Male and female plants are required for fertile seed production. Height: 2m (6ft) Width: 1.5m (4ft). Conservation status: endangered.

Chamaedorea radicalis (Hardy Parlour Palm):

This species from Mexico has tough, dark green, leathery leaves, and grows to a height of 3m. It prefers a shady location in a sheltered garden, and may flower when young. This is the hardiest of the genus and mature plants may withstand temperatures as low as -8C. Male and female plants are required for fertile seed production. Height: 3m (9ft) Width: 2m (6ft). Conservation status: vulnerable.

Dypsis decipiens (Manambe Palm): *D. decipiens* has stiff, upright, leathery leaflets, and is from Madagascar. The stems are yellow. It needs bright, indirect light when young. When mature it may be grown in a sheltered, sunny garden where it will withstand some frost. Single plants are capable of producing fertile seed. Height: 6m (20ft) Width: 2.5m (8ft). Conservation status: endangered.

Dypsis utilis (Vonitra Palm): This is an unusual palm with new leaves that are red and a forking trunk. It requires bright, indirect light, and is from Madagascar. It is not suitable for outdoors. Single plants are capable of producing fertile seed. Height: 6m (20ft) Width: 2.5m (8ft). Conservation status: vulnerable.

Phoenix rupicola (Cliff Date Palm): This palm is native to India where it grows in rocky situations in the foothills of the Himalayas. It has glossy leaflets held in a flat plane. When young, it requires bright, indirect light; but when older, it will take full sun and may tolerate a few degrees of frost in a sheltered garden, although this is uncertain. Male and female plants are required for fertile seed production. Height: 7.5m (25ft) Width: 2.5m (8ft). Conservation status: vulnerable.

Phoenix theophrastii (Cretan Date Palm): The Cretan date palm is one of only two species of palm that grow naturally in Europe. It survives in only a few areas of Crete, Greece, and Turkey, where it grows on rocky slopes in semi arid areas. It has silver-grey foliage and a spiky appearance. In a sheltered spot in a sunny garden, mature plants will tolerate both frost and drought.

Indoors the plant requires bright, indirect light. Male and female plants are required for fertile seed production. Height: 6m (20ft) Width: 2m (6ft). Conservation status: vulnerable.

Rhopalostylis baueri (Kermadec Island Nikau Palm): When mature this palm has a swollen crown-shaft, upright leaves, and broad leaflets, thereby giving the appearance of a shuttlecock. When young it can be kept indoors. When older it can be kept in a very sheltered garden where it will require rich soil. It requires protection if the temperature drops below the freezing point. Single plants are capable of producing fertile seed. Height: 7.5m (25ft) Width: 3m (9ft). Conservation status: rare.

Rhopalostylis sapida (Nikau Palm, Feather Duster Palm): *R.sapida* comes from New Zealand and the Chatham Islands, and is the most southerly naturally occurring palm. It grows in wet forests, often in poorly lit situations. Plants need shady, moist conditions and protection from sunlight until they are about five years old. When larger, *R.sapida* is suitable for cultivation outdoors in a cool temperate climate. It is best suited to a cool and moist position in a sheltered garden where it will require protection if the temperature drops below about 3°C. Single plants are capable of producing fertile seed. Height: 7.5m (25ft) Width: 3m (9ft). Conservation status: indeterminate.



Palm Trees of Lake Geneva

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at the beginning of the season, in large holes that are deep and well drained.

I went to Ticino in May in search of a new *Jubaea*. Unfortunately, as the large specimens are rare and much in demand, I came back home with empty hands. Finally, with the help of the Palm Centre (thank you Martin!) I received a much wished-for *Jubaea* in July that I immediately planted it in the garden, in a large, deep hole with well draining soil. The next autumn, my wife gave me a second *Trachycarpus* that measured 180cm. Though I was anxious to have it in the ground, I'd learned my lesson, and decided to keep it in its pot for the first winter. For extra caution, I used rain protection and mulch on the *Jubaea* to help it through its first winter. The first *Trachycarpus* remained without protection. Luckily, the winter of 1999-2000 was less cold with -8°C and the *Jubaea* and the *Trachycarpus* are in good health.

My last acquisitions are a *Brahea armata* of 160cm and a *Butia yatay*. The *Brahea* was planted in the garden at the end of March in a very sandy soil. Like others, I am surprised by its speed of growth. At the end of May, it had already produced a whole leaf. I also have many young plants: *Brahea armata*, *Chamaerops humilis*, *Sabal minor*, *Washingtonia filifera*, *Jubaea chilensis*, *Syagrus romanzoffiana*, *Phoenix canariensis*, *Trachycarpus fortunei*, *T. takil* and *T. latisectus*. My goal is to try acclimating *Phoenix theophrasti* and *Parajubaea torallyi*, which seem to me particularly interesting.

Palms of Tenerife

*by Michael A.F. Carter, 52 Golden Avenue, West Kingston, N. East Preston, Littlehampton, West Sussex
BN16 1QX*

Tenerife, one of the largest of the Canary Islands, has a number of features of great interest to plant lovers. Situated at the centre of the archipelago off the coast of North Africa, its southerly location at around 28 north and oceanic position, guarantees year round sunshine and frost free conditions at sea level. However, the cold Canary current driving North Atlantic seas down from more northern climes ensures that the island remains cooler in the summer than could reasonably be expected at this latitude. Consequently although a typical mean temperature in January is around 16°C/61°F, this rises in August to 24°C/75°F only, considerably less than much of the Mediterranean countries lying significantly further north.

Another feature is the dryness of the interior and South and West of the island, owing to its proximity to the Sahara and mountainous terrain in countries to the North and East, which receive limited rainfall from the prevailing Trade Winds. Within an hour's drive it is possible to go from lush banana plantations and vineyards to near desert conditions therefore.

Lastly is the impact of altitude. The islands, which are volcanic, have risen from the ocean floor many millions of years ago with corresponding numerous high peaks. In Tenerife this feature is even more extremely demonstrated than on the other islands, with Mt. Teide ñ a brooding volcano rising to 12,200 feet above sea level.

Tenerife shares with its neighbours, a number of famous native trees. Probably the most widely planted world-wide, ornamental for temperate and sub-tropics is Phoenix canariensis, the Canary Island Date Palm which appears

everywhere at the lower levels. This magnificent palm of course flourishes widely, but huge specimens can be particularly appreciated in the town square of the market town of La Orataura, along the fertile north coast valley of the same name. In the area too can be seen the famous Canary Dragon Tree, *Dracaena Draco*, with a specimen at nearby Icod, claimed to be 3000 years old.

Further up the slopes appear forests of the beautiful Canary Island Pine, *Pinus canariensis*. Indeed a must for any visitor is a drive by escorted bus taking 2 to two and a half hours from the coast to around 7,000 feet up Mt. Teide. The journey literally commences beside African Flame Trees and Frangipani and finishes above the tree line. A trip which would normally cover 30 to 40 degrees of latitude! I noted that the last part of the journey saw (presumably introduced Blue Atlantic cedars, from the Atlas mountains, take over from the pines to the to the winter ski slope. Seeing these Cedars capable of growing at this height resistant to fierce winds and intense sunlight in the rarified atmosphere is truly breathtaking.

I visited the Canary Islands several times in the 1970's. I recall in addition to the Canary Island palms, the ubiquitous *Washingtonia*, a single large coconut, *Cocus nucifera* in Las Palmas on Gran Canaria and a few *Howea* palms in Northern Tenerife. In summer 1999, however, I was fortunate to return to Puerto de la Cruz, a major resort on the northern green coast of Tenerife, for a holiday. I was intrigued to see whether the continuing rise of the vacation industry has triggered a more adventurous range of ornamental palms capable of thriving in this benign climate. I knew for example that in this

resort a single Lido swimming pool area had now been superseded by a series of artificial volcanic ringed lagoons complete with waterfalls, large fountains for bathers to overcome the lack of natural beaches and in the resorts, yellow Sahara sand had been shipped in to improve 'Mother Nature'.

I was not to be disappointed. *Cocos nucifera* was now planted everywhere at sea level, as were *Howea forsteriana* Caryota species, *Syagrus romanzoffiana*, *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana* and *Roystonea* palms. The general effect in some resort areas, like Puerto de La Cruz is that of a mini Caribbean or Hawaii.

Two specific sites are of particular interest to plant fanciers, viz. The Botanic Gardens at Puerto and the Loro Parque Theme Park. The Botanic Gardens, and indeed the surrounding suburbs, called El Boltanico, are a must with Flame Trees, ornamental ponds and tropical trees of immense size with trunk-like aerial roots. The collection of palms and tree ferns in this 200 year old garden, is immense with everything from the West African Oil Palm, *Elaeis guineensis*, through to the *Trachycarpus* species. The entire length of one side of the garden is taken up with planted out individual specimens of palms, each one representing a different type to its neighbour, with various members of the same family planted in proximity, allowing contrasts to be readily made.

One further surprise was the Loro Parque Zoological/Botanical Theme Park situated near the coast on the other side of Puerto de La Cruz. The park was founded by the German naturalist Wolfgang Kiessling in late 1972 to house a collection of rare parrots. Today it has been expanded to an area ten times its original size and now houses more than 800 species and sub-species of the parrot family, plus many mammals, including chimpanzees, tigers, gorillas, plus dolphins and reptiles etc. The viewing areas, laboratories, restaurants and transport facilities are all extremely modern and clean and would do credit to the most successful U.S. Theme Park.

A large botanical collection is featured, including a line of rapidly grown *Roystoneas* at the entrance by the Thai Pavilion, complete with three elephant shaped topiary displays. Many palms including fruiting coconuts, can also be seen. However, the most spectacular part of the garden is undoubtedly the *Kentia* Palm Grove containing some 750 *Howeia Forsteriana* palms, most with green trucks, amongst which stroll Crowned Cranes to add to the spectacle. All of this just four hours flight time away from the south of England!



The Cretan Date Palm

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impossible to see the individual trunks. The most fascinating thing for me was the light green to slightly blue colouring, and the extreme stiffness, of the leaves. I have got a very lively impression of the spiny nature of these leaves as I hurt myself on the head when I was collecting some seeds. After 2km the palms grew smaller and finally disappeared, and the canyon ended at a waterfall.

On the way back, I waded through the river to get some further impressions. Back on the beach, I met my friends and we stayed until the sun disappeared behind the mountains. Deeply impressed with pockets full of palm seeds, we made our way back.



Completely Hardy

by Rev. Geoffrey F. Squire

One winter afternoon about three years ago, I was driving through a suburb of Torquay when the light on a set of temporary traffic lights changed to red. As I waited there I glanced around at the houses and was amazed to see what appeared to be a tall *Rhopalostylis sapida* growing in the corner of the walls of a large house and just visible above the tall boundary walls.

I had heard that one or two of these used to grow in the area but were killed by an exceptionally cold night in February 1987, so I was quite excited about this find, and resolved to return again on a brighter day with a camera to photograph some for possible publication in *Chamaerops*.

Early the following spring I was in the area on a bright afternoon, and set off walking around, camera in hand, to try to relocate the palm. After walking around the area for about an hour without finding it, I gave up. Over the months following I made two more attempts, but with no luck. Then, a few weeks ago, I was driving a minibus through the area and suddenly spotted it. I realized that I needed the raised seat of the minibus to see it over the high garden walls.

I parked around the corner and returned, with my camera, to the house. I rang the front door bell to explain my interest in the palm to a very pleasant woman who seemed to find my interest amusing. She took me around the corner, and there it was. It stood about 5m, but was of a somewhat different species than I anticipated, one that should be completely hardy in all regions south of the Arctic Circle.

It was *Rhopalostylis sapida*, variety "Plastica," and was "growing" in a solid block of concrete!

The whole thing was made of plastic with a sectional screw-together trunk, and was once used by the woman's husband for a series of trade exhibitions in relation to New Zealand.

At a recent local fair I saw 3/4m high plastic "Fan Palms" (very good copies of small *Trachycarpus*) for sale in plastic pots. At that same fair I also saw a stall selling similarly sized but real live "Garden Palms," which were not the incorrectly named "Westcountry Palms," *Cordyline australis*, but *Phoenix canariensis*.

With the ability to reproduce, in plastic and with an amazing degree of accuracy, things like leaves, flowers, and palms, I suppose that it is only a matter of time before plastic coconut palms are seen along the seafloor of some East-coast resort or amusement park. I am sure that the readers of *Chamaerops*, however, will consider the possibility of some of those *Phoenix canariensis* growing to maturity somewhere in North Devon to be much more exciting.



My Exotic Collection

by Tony Walker, 16 Dunstall Road, London SW20 0HR, England

Outside, bedded out, my less-than-ten-years-old *Trachycarpus fortunei* grows excessively fast. Its trunk is now about 1m tall. It is at the base of our front (SSE-facing) rockery, so may get some water drain off, and I put a few gelatin granules amongst the roots when planting it. The slightly older *Trachycarpus wagnerianus* is much slower, but it is in the middle of a sloping lawn that readily dries out, and was not given gelatine granules. Slower still is my *Butia capitata*, but it is at the top of the front rockery, which can be very dry, though it does have gelatine granules. My *Chamaerops* grows steadily, but not quickly. It is in a slightly damper patch of grass than the *Trachycarpus wagnerianus*, on the back lawn. None of the above receive weather protection. Over the years the only trouble I've noted is frost damage to new growth on the *Butia* in spring after a late frost.

Potted and indoors in winter, my *Caryota* 'Himalaya' grows steadily but had a set back last winter when I left it outside. It lost all its leaves in Nov/Dec 1999, when there were some frosts, but the roots in the not-insulated pot were fine. Now, a year later, the first of the new lot of leaves is about to unfold. A Phoenix (from a date stone), just about hangs on, and it is very slow. Maybe it needs more feeding, or more heat. The two 'parlour palms', *Chamaedorea elegans* and *Chamaedorea metallica*, seem fine and grow steadily. I'm afraid I always cut the flower buds off the former, mainly to prevent a later mess, but also maybe to promote leaf growth.

I do not seem to manage to grow Cycads, despite germinating *Encephalartos friderici-guilielmi* from seed and keeping it a year. I managed to keep plants for up to four or five years, but then they slowly fade away and die.

While living, new leaves are produced, though maybe still from seed reserves. They need something else later on, and I don't know what. Is it chemical or physical? Am I getting the compost wrong, the watering, or are they too cold? I find them more difficult than palms, most cacti and succulents, my terrestrial orchids, or anything else I grow. Yet in some non-specialist garden centers one can find Cycads almost 'two a penny' - in old money! It would be interesting to know people's respective abilities to keep Cycads in the house in a sunny window or in the green house. Even some hotels seem to have no problem, often having several in the foyer for a long time. And they probably use tap water too! All for now, more news as it breaks.



A Garden in Provence

by Daniel Carle, Route de Modene 604, 84330 Caromb, France

Responding to the letter of B. Schnell (Chamaerops # 37), I am sending a few photos of my "exotic" garden situated in Southeast France in Provence: between Avignon (30 km) and Mont-Ventroux (10 km). The altitude is about 190m, latitude 44°05'N and it is 90km from the Mediterranean Sea.

Showing palm enthusiasts gardens throughout European countries is, I think, an excellent idea. When I started to plant my first exotic plants, they consisted of an ordinary *Yucca gloriosa* in 1982 and four *Trachycarpus fortunei* in 1984. At this time they were 50cm in height; they are now about 5m tall and one plant fruits every year. Similarly, three *Cordyline australis*, 50cm when planted in 1987, are now 5m tall and blossom every year.

In 1988, near the *Trachycarpus*, I planted a small *Washingtonia filifera* (50cm). I have seen amazingly fast growth, and it now reaches about 7m tall and has a 4m trunk (circumference = 2,5m). It is planted in a sheltered position (lots of sun, sheltered from the Mistral and cold winds). It has withstood about -10°C in winter. Between the *Trachycarpus* and *Washingtonia* is a *Brahea armata*, 40cm tall when planted in 1989, 1,70m now with 50cm trunk. I made the mistake of planting it under a fig tree, creating a too shady position in summer, but this hasn't prevented it from growing well, though more slowly than the *Washingtonia*, of course.

My other plantings are a *Phoenix canariensis* in 1987 (50cm), which is 2m tall now; three *Butia capitata* planted in the early 90's; and another *T. fortunei* (but in a windy position). After a difficult start due to the cold Mistral when young, it's now very hardy. All these palms have withstood -10°C since 1987 (three or four times).

More recently I've tried to plant some different palms, and some have also withstood -10°C, including: *Jubaea chilensis* (50cm tall);

Brahea edulis (40cm); *Trithrinax acanthocoma* (40cm); *Nannorrhops ritchiana* (25cm); two *Trachycarpus wagnerianus* (30cm); *Chamaerops humilis* (50cm); and *Sabal mexicana*, *Sabal minor* and *Sabal palmetto*. All these plants are relatively young and not protected in winter. These other plantings have withstood -7°C (lightly protected): *Brahea brandegeeii* (50cm); *Trithrinax campestris* (20cm); *Rhapis excelsa* (80cm); *Phoenix roebelenii* (60cm); *Livistona decipiens* (50cm); and *Butia yatay*. One *Syagrus romanzoffiana* (1,50m) failed at -7°C, but I planted another one the following spring.

This spring I tried some more exotic palms (all about 50cm high), in very sheltered positions: *Phoenix sylvestris*; *Brahea dulcis*; two *Phoenix reclinata*; *Livistona australis*, *L. chinensis*, *L. decipiens*; *Cycas revoluta*; and the more delicate *Parajubaea coccoides*. This one will probably need a heating cable in winter. Around these palms I planted other exotics: Some *Eucalyptus* (*E. gunnii*, *E. viminalis*, *E. dalrympleana*); one *Abutilon megapotamium*; lots of agaves, yuccas, opuntias; a *Musa basjoo*; one Kumquat (*Citrus fortunella* or *Fortunella margarita*); one *Citrus* sp. (Japanese lemon tree); and two *Citrus satsuma* (Japanese mandarin trees).

All these plants are rather cold hardy and thrive well in this Mediterranean climate, but I'm waiting for a severe winter to give their cold hardiness a real test. In Provence, the main problem for exotic plantings are the frosts in winter, usually between -6°C and -10°C, depending on the winter; and eventually a very hard frost, occurring about every 30 years, like in 1956 or 1985, dipping to temperatures around -17°C. Apart from the Mistral, which can blow all year, another problem is the dryness in summer, which necessitates frequent watering for young palms. I hope that palm enthusiasts will be inspired with this news from Provence.



Letters

Your chance to air your views and share your news.

"The New Exotic Garden" - Book Review

The editorial in *Chamaerops* 34 discussed the use of other exotic plants to complement our outdoor palm collections. Of particular note was the comment "the effect can be jaw-dropping".

I wish to draw to the attention of EPS members the recent release of an excellent book entitled "The New Exotic Garden" by Will Giles, published by Mitchell Beazley (Hardback, ISBN 1-84000-241-7)

With many stunning colour photographs it illustrates how to use hardy or near hardy exotics to introduce colour, texture and form to the cool temperate garden. The author discusses the use of hardy palms, bamboos, phormiums and other architectural evergreens to provide a permanent hardy structure and backbone. Three chapters then describe how to create each of the three main types of exotic garden :- the colourful tropical-look garden using contrasting textures and hot reds, oranges and yellows provided by plants like cannas, bananas, ginger, aroids, dahlias and coleus; the lush jungle-style garden incorporating hardy ferns, hostas and grasses into the evergreen background; and the dry mediterranean style garden using succulents, Yuccas and other drought resistant plants. Most gardens possess the microclimates to create at least two of these styles. The author then goes on to discuss the techniques he uses to grow and over-winter the main groups of exotics, namely cordylines, succulents, cannas, ginger, tree ferns, aroids, bananas, coleus and bamboo. The final chapter is a directory of exotic plants by genus with descriptions of the best species to use, heights, site and soil requirements and both U.K. and U.S. hardiness ratings. Refreshingly for us palm enthusiasts, the section on palms includes not only *Trachycarpus* and *Chamaerops* but also *Brahea*, *Butia*, *Jubaea*,

Nannorrhops and Phoenix.

In conclusion, for dedicated palm lovers this book offers us the inspiration to turn our spiky green palm collections into the core of an exotic paradise - well worth the £17.99 asking price.

Alan Hindle, Dudley, UK

Pigmy Waggie

Back in 1992 I bought 130 *Trachycarpus fortunei* seeds and managed to get most of them to germinate. After about 18 months I noticed that 3 had much smaller and stiffer leaves. I kept these to one side, as I didn't want to sell them or give them to friends and relatives. They are now quite definitely Waggies. All 3 grow at the same rate and have approximately the same number of leaves, but 1 is markedly smaller than the other two.

They all germinated in spring 1992, so they are about 8 years old. The two larger ones are 38 cm tall with 16 cm diameter leaves. The smaller one, however, is only 21 cm tall with a maximum leaf diameter of just 9 cm. As I already explained the growth rate is the same for all three, only the proportions are different. It will be interesting to see how thick (or thin) the trunk is, when it grows one. Do you know of any other Pigmy Waggies?

Dave

Thanks Dave, nice picture. Waggies seem to come in all shapes and sizes. We get them here sometimes with small leaves like yours, but I don't know if they retain this stature, or if it grows out as they get bigger. I suppose the ultimate is no leaf at all, just a collection of petiole stumps! I expect you're planning to plant them out; it will be interesting to



see how they develop over the years. (mg)

World's Most Northerly Palm?

I am sending you a photo of the *Trachycarpus Wagerianus* that I took to Iceland last summer, which is not only surviving -20C temps and 80 knots winds in almost total darkness, but has new leaves coming on. It is truly an amazing palm, grown on the 66°N parallel just below the Arctic Circle. Is this the most northerly palm in the world? My friend has it planted next to his 'hot tub' which may help its survival.....just from what it sees in the hot tub, if not the warmth...!!

Hal Gamble



A Scenic Haven

I thought your readers would be interested in the following. To sell: Largest outdoor Palm collection in central Europe, with property and house. About 120 rare species, plus thousands of other plants. House has a wonderful lake-view, 11 rooms, outside and inside swimming pool and whirlpool. Property is surrounded by protected forests, situated 60 m above Lago Maggiore. A scenic haven for plant lovers! Please contact P.O. Box 715, CH-6614, Brissago, Switzerland.

Error

I wish to correct an error in my article

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"Winter Growth", page 16, *Chamaerops* 37. My *Phoenix canariensis* in the ground is protected when the temperature drops below minus three Celsius and not plus three Celsius as stated. On one icy, snowy night however, the palm was left unprotected causing the above-ground foliage to be killed. I pulled out a couple of rotting spears in late winter and poured in regular doses of fungicide until early summer. The palm soon grew back to its original size over the summer.

Alan Hindle, Dudley, U.K.

Tales of a Rooftop Gardener

I have a flat roof extension which I converted to a walk-on balcony. It is south facing and is enjoyed by my small collection of palms, yuccas, and cordylines. The floor of the balcony is covered with heavy grade, green mineral felt. All the plants are obviously in pots; some have trays, but some don't to allow for better drainage. One plant from this latter category is a 90 cm *Phoenix Canariensis* in a 10" pot. Recently it gave me and my pansy-and-petunia-loving wife (how boring) quite a shock. The Date palm had sent its roots through the pot drainage holes and bored its way into the roofing felt about 10-12" in every direction. I was dumbfounded. I then had the task of carefully cutting away the felt to reveal a mass of beautiful, creamy white, healthy roots; and, of course, repotting the palm.

The outcome of this little episode? Well, my appreciation for the tenacity of palms has heightened while my wife is now even more determined to stick to her pansies and petunias. Needless to say, all my pots are now in trays.

Paul Hardy, Sheffield, U.K.

A Long Winter

Although I've been an EPS member for 3 years, I've never written. At the moment I'm a little out of practice speaking English, but I hope

you understand nevertheless. I always like the prefaces in 'Chamaerops' best. I'm a great fan of *Trithrinax acanthocoma*. I bought one such palm over 4 years ago and now it is almost 1 meter high. Last spring, after a long winter, it was clear that it had suffered. The new sprout was brown, and during the summer the palm grew really short fronds. Was this caused by dryness in winter or, perhaps, not having the right pH value after transplanting it to a new pot?

I'd like to write an article about all my plants, palms and banana trees, for *Chamaerops* soon. For today, thank you very much and many kind regards.

Helga Baumgartner, Burghausen, Germany.

Trithrinax acanthocoma is very tolerant to varying pH levels in the soil, so I'm sure this was not the problem. It is more likely that dryness in the soil or prolonged exposure to cold and damp conditions was the cause. (ts)

Uxbridge *Trachycarpus*

I am writing to report on the marvelous stand of *Trachycarpus fortunei* growing in the grounds of Brunel University at Uxbridge.

I should explain that my wife and I met at Brunel in the mid-1970s where we both studied Chemistry, and although we have lived in the area since graduating, we have rarely returned to the campus. However, in April this year we attended a Chemistry Department reunion, along with Brunel graduates from the past 40 years, which gave us the opportunity to have a good look round.

The weather was awful, cold and wet, and made more depressing by the news of the imminent closure of the Chemistry Department, after 50 years at Uxbridge. Therefore, imagine our pleasure on finding that those "strange spiky plants" we remembered in the grass in front of the Biology-Chemistry building had grown into

a fine stand of 22 *Trachycarpus fortunei*!

These are planted in two informal groups at the western end of the building, with a double row of 14 plants towards the east. All enjoy a southerly aspect and are protected by the building from the occasional cold north wind. As can be seen from the enclosed photographs, the plants are in fine condition and the abundant fruit indicates that they had all flowered the previous year.

I should add that in the 1970s I had absolutely no interest in palms and had, along with almost everyone else at Brunel, dismissed these "strange" plants and imagined that they would soon succumb to the cold. There must have been at least one palm enthusiast since. I understand that the young plants were given to the university by one of the professors. The lesson for all of us palm enthusiasts, (and others), is of course, that *Trachycarpus fortunei* and many other "hardy" palms can grow into magnificent features given sufficient time and favourable conditions. They certainly do an excellent job of hiding the otherwise unattractive concrete and glass buildings at Brunel.

Hopefully other institutions and local authorities can be encouraged to plant more palms now in order to provide a similarly impressive spectacle in 25 years time. We will certainly be returning to the campus later on in the summer to photograph these palms in flower.

N A J Hobbs, Uxbridge, Middlesex, U.K.

Send your letters to:

*The European Palm Society
c/o The Palm Centre
Ham Central Nursery
Ham Street, Ham
Richmond, Surrey, TW10 7HA, UK*

Or by e-mail: mail@palmssociety.org

www.palmsociety.org

