

# Chamaerops 42



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**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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# Editorial

With summer finally here, the temperature rising, the sun shining and the breeze chasing away those fluffy white clouds leaving an azure blue sky, it seems an odd time to visit the southern hemisphere and travel back (or forward?) 6 months in time, to when the leaves are turning shades of red, yellow and gold, and sweeping down from the trees on the back of an icy autumnal wind. For this is Chile, that extremely long and extremely narrow band of a country that clings to the western edge of Argentina.

It doesn't take a lot of imagination on the part of palm enthusiasts to work out why I am here. The prize is *Jubaea chilensis*, surely the biggest-trunked, and one of the most cold-hardy of all palms. Funny, the concept of 'west' and 'east' hardly seems to exist in this strip of a nation, everything and everywhere is either 'north' or 'south'; 'up' or 'down', and from Santiago, the capital, this, of course, includes the two main national parks where this wonderful palm still grows in the wild, one up, and one down.

First a city tour, ending up at a high hillside park overlooking the metropolis, stunning, with skyscrapers and glass towers, and a remarkable backdrop of snow covered mountains, the Andes, spine of South America. Downside: a band of brown polluted air that hangs over the city like a pall, and for which the word 'fug' was surely coined. It's worst at this time of year I am told; low humidity and no air movement. Traffic jams everywhere keep it from dissipating. That aside, it's a stunning view, from a stunning park, populated by 30 or 40 colossi of the palm world, the endemic *Jubaea*, Chilean Wine palm, standing sentinel, high over the city.

North then to the first of the parks where we will see these giants in the wild, along straight north/south roads (that's all there are) lined with poplars, elms and sycamores, all turning autumnal colours, reds and golds, it could be England in October, apart from the fact that there are acres

and acres of vineyards behind the trees, busy making one of Chile's most important exports.

After a couple of hours drive we are here. A long and winding road then suddenly we are among them, hundreds and hundreds of huge *Jubaeas*, in ones and twos and in groups of five or ten. To say they dominate the landscape would be an understatement; they ARE the landscape. The sky is deep, deep blue and between the palms' bulk we can see hills and valleys, all clad to a greater or lesser degree with these stunning palms. Even along the high ridge, hundreds of feet above us, we can see a long line of them like Redskins in a cowboy movie. Curiously there are no (or very few) young plants; all the seeds are collected for sale either for export or in the local market, and men and women are wandering around with overflowing cans and baskets.

Two days later we are in a similar reserve, a few hundred kilometres to the south. It's noticeably cooler here, but the morning sun is rapidly warming the air, and steam is rising from the *Jubaeas*' trunks after last night's downpour. It's a curious sight, these huge pachydermal palms wreathed in mist, and our cameras are busy. Again, the seed collectors are active, no seedlings this year, that's for sure.

Darwin reported seeing hundreds of thousands of *Jubaeas* when he sailed to Chile on the *Beagle*, inspired by the wildlife on the Chilean Galapagos Islands to write his 'Origin of the Species'. The palm's downfall has been that its cut trunk exudes a sweet sap, which can be drunk as Palm Honey, or processed to produce Palm Wine. For this reason, countless thousands have been felled since Darwin's time and today's population is but a shadow of its former self. Mercifully, the tree is now protected as Chile's national tree and, incredibly, efforts are being made to replace ALL the lost palms, a thankless task since they will hardly reach maturity in a man's lifetime.

M.G.



# A Lifetime of Experience

*Eric van Speybroeck, Zevegem (De Pinte), Belgium*

My interest in palms started when I was still young, in the late 50's. It probably happened as it happens for most of us: views of postcards with palm trees in the background, magazines with palm pictures, and films shot in a sunshine climate where hundreds or thousands of palms grow happily in a place that looks like paradise.

I have always been fascinated with the image of palm trees. I don't know exactly why, except that they seem to express something completely different from other, ordinary trees; they look so unique, and when fully grown, are really majestic.

I can even recall the specific moment when I decided that I would grow palms. In 1957 I left my home, a small village near Ghent in Belgium, for a business trip in Italy. After having crossed France, I arrived on the other side of Mont Blanc in the Italian town Aosta. When I was driving my car from Aosta towards Ivrea, my attention was suddenly drawn to something that looked like a palm tree at least 500m away. When I got closer, I saw the characteristic stem of a palm tree with a big crown of leaves, planted very close to the wall of a house. This palm tree was later identified as being a *Trachycarpus fortunei*, but 40 years ago, this name was practically not known. At that time, "*Chamaerops excelsa*" was used, though we now

know this species does not exist. (There is, of course, a *Chamaerops humilis*, which is completely different). From that moment on, after seeing that a palm tree could grow in such an inhospitable region, I decided that I would grow palms.

I started a nursery in 1963 under the name of "Plantimpex," and soon grew and commercialized *Howea forsteriana*, an indoor palm tree appreciated for its durability and ease of cultivation.

I still remember the first two *Trachycarpus fortunei* I planted in my garden in May, 1965. They were imported from Spain through a local nurseryman, and grew very well for 20 years only to be destroyed in the 1985/86 winter, which was the coldest winter in the last 35 years. That January had a minimum temperature of -18°C which lasted approximately ten days, followed by a two week spell of very mild weather, and followed again in February by another ten days in which the minimum temperature was as low as -19°C.

I planted more *Trachycarpus fortunei* between 1965 and 1980, and a lot of those palms survived that winter, although they all suffered from the severe cold spell. In February, 1967, I planted about ten *T. fortunei*, all 3 to 5m high and imported directly from Italy. They all grew well until 1985 when they were mostly killed during that infamous winter. In the spring of 1975 most palms were in full bloom, and my surprise came in the summer of 1976 when I discovered some small palms only a few centimeters high growing in the shadows of the big ones. They survived the winter of 1985 and by now have reached 3 1/2 to 4m with trunks 2 1/2 to 3m high.

I could not stay with just one genera and species, of course, even though I still consider *Trachycarpus fortunei* to be the best palm tree for our region. I believe it even grows better here than

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*Top left and right: Trachycarpus fortunei, flowering in the garden.*

*Middle left: Chamaerops humilis has grown into a dense group.*

*Middle right: A young Jubaea chilensis.*

*Bottom left: Trachycarpus wagnerianus near the house.*

*Bottom right: Chamaerops humilis protected against the house.*

in warmer regions, such as the south of France, Italy, or Spain, since it prefers a mild climate without extremes and a lot of water.

In 1959, I heard about the International Palm Society, which had been created in the U.S. in April, 1956. Through their quarterly publication *Principes* (which became *Palms* in January, 1999), I learned about a lot of other hardy palm trees, such as *Trachycarpus wagnerianus*, *Chamaerops humilis*, *Rhapidophyllum hystrix*, *Sabal minor* and *Sabal palmetto*, *Butia capitata*, *Jubaea chilensis*, *Brahea armata*, and so on.

I started trying these palms as early as 1971. Most of them, except *T. wagnerianus* and *R. hystrix*, are not as cold hardy as *T. fortunei*, but can still be grown here with a minimum of care. This means a south, southeast or southwest exposure and protection from cold northerly winds, which may include some protection with straw, jute, or a bag in very cold winters. Believe me, most of them grow very well and remain in perfect condition most of the time. While a very severe winter might partially destroy them or eventually kill them, many of the palms I planted between 1971 and 1980 are still growing well.

Several new species of *Trachycarpus* were introduced some years ago by Martin Gibbons and Toby Spanner, who have done a lot of research on palm hardiness. These species, including *T. takil*, *T. oreophilus*, *T. martianus*, *T. nanus*, *T. princeps*, and *T. latisectus*, all come from the mountainous regions of or around the Himalayas in China, India, Nepal, and Thailand. Their cold hardiness has not been fully tested, however, since most palms are still young and small.

So what conclusions can be drawn from a man with 35 years of experience, who is first a true palm lover and second a palm grower? I have learned quite a lot about caring for and growing palms since I started growing them, and while there have been regular losses in severe weather conditions, this means nothing in comparison to the pleasure you feel when you succeed at something you love. To help palm lovers like myself succeed, we now

have regular publications and books on growing palms from all over the world. In *Chamaerops*, for instance, there have been several articles by palm enthusiasts about palms that are now grown in countries where you would not suspect them to grow, such as Austria, Azebaidjan, Bulgaria, Crimea, Georgia, Germany, Holland, and Scandinavia. In terms of cities, a lot of *Trachycarpus fortunei*, among others, have recently been planted in Paris, and I predict that London will soon be the capital of palms, as you see them everywhere.

Since the 1990's, "Plantimpex" has been transformed into a "Palmeraie" with several thousands of palms of all sizes. Most are *Trachycarpus fortunei* and rather small, but there are also some specimens with up to 2 to 3m of stem. Other palms available in smaller quantities are *Trachycarpus wagnerianus*, *Rhapidophyllum hystrix*, *Chamaerops humilis*, *Sabal minor* and *Sabal palmetto*, *Butia capitata*, and *Brahea armata* - enough to transform an ordinary garden into a luxuriant palm haven. With palms, you can completely change your garden, or even create an exotic corner in or around terraces, patios, swimming pools and so on.

As more people realize that these beautiful plants can be grown easily and in all kinds of different climates and soils, there is no doubt that the palm world will expand even more rapidly and that demand will be bigger in the near future than it has been in the past. As I write these words, I can already detect the first spathes on several *Trachycarpus fortunei* and *Chamaerops humilis*, which, in two to three weeks of warm weather, will emerge into beautiful flower stalks that will give me a lot of happiness and pleasure the whole year round. I hope that these few lines may encourage other palm enthusiasts all over Europe who have not yet, for one reason or another, started planting palms in their own gardens. Wherever you live, if you can find a southern corner that is well protected in winter, even in the coldest regions, you, too, can grow palms.

# The Palm World on the Island of Tenerife

*Carlo Morici, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Canarias,  
Spain*

I live in Europe, in a mid-sized city, but I have no umbrella. No, I am not asking the readers of *Chamaerops* to send me money so I can buy an umbrella, but thank you anyway. I just don't need one. That is because I am one of the 600,000 people who live on the island of Tenerife. We are located beyond what you may think of as the boundaries of the European Union, but we are part of Spain. Our climate may be loosely characterized as a rainless, eternal spring, and this is one of the reasons why 11 million European tourists visit our islands every year. This, of course, is also why I don't need that device to keep my head dry.

How do palms grow in the rainless spring? The oceanic climate of Tenerife is really quite good for growing palms. It is equable and inflicts no thermal stresses. Private and public gardens on the island hold more than 600 palm species, and more species could be added to the list. The island has a surface of 2000 km<sup>2</sup>, and the climates of the northern and southern parts of the island differ greatly. The northern coast is cooler, cloudier and more moist than the southern coast, which is dry, sunny and warm. The absolute minimum temperature recorded in the north is 9°C, while on the southern coast the temperature has never fallen below 12°C. The hottest summer temperatures rarely exceed 30°C on both coasts.

Hundreds of palm species can be grown on both coasts, but the true warmth-loving tropicals do well only on the desert southern coast, and only if water and shade are provided.

As the altitude increases, the nights become

much colder, though day temperatures remain warm. The climate at 600 to 900 m asl is comparable to that of the southern Mediterranean. Above 1000 m, frosts occur. The island is topped by the volcano Teide, at 3718 m, which experiences very hard frosts and snow. Few people grow palms in the highlands, which are usually considered too cold for most palms. Actually, some sheltered windless spots at 400-800 m could be interesting for planting high-altitude palms such as *Ceroxylon* or *Trachycarpus*.

If you live at sea level, temperatures are not a problem. The principal nightmares of the palm grower on Tenerife are wind, dry air, drought, too much sun and too little soil (here and there one can find outcrops of solid lava). Water quantity and water quality are probably the greatest limiting factors, and virtually all our palm losses have been due to lack of water. In our dry climate, much more irrigation is needed than in non-desert tropics or subtropics, and on Tenerife, water can be expensive, salty, hard, too alkaline, polluted, or--even worse--there can be no water at all!

## A Cultural Symbol

The palm is unquestionably a prominent symbol in the visual culture of this island. Palm silhouettes appear on postcards, logotypes, and any kind of decoration, mural, or advertisement. Palms are simply everywhere, even during Carnival, when many disguises and sceneries feature palms. Once I saw a man dancing in the crowd with a 4-meter tall *Veitchia joannis*, which, in his alcoholic enthusiasm, he had surely uprooted and stolen from a city garden.



Phoenix leaves are used to decorate towns during festivals, and street cleaners still use them as brooms. And they use them by the thousands . . . scroushscroush! Even in the center of the largest city, one can hear the sound of the street being cleaned with a *canariensis* leaf, followed by the most technically advanced, automatic cleaning machines.

“Miel de palma” is the concentrated sap of *P. canariensis*. It is collected and produced through a complicated traditional procedure, and is served as a topping for desserts or fruit in fancy restaurants.

Even if the palm tree is fully integrated into the culture, local people are nonetheless conscious that it has an exotic quality. Together with the dragon tree (*Dracaena draco*) and the banana tree, palms make the Canaries the land of arborescent monocots, splashes of palmy colour in the grey sea of a deciduous Europe.

## Palms on the Island - New Palms, New Surprises

In the next few lines, I will tell the story of an island that, until two decades ago, hosted just 10 or 15 palm species in its streets and public gardens. Today it may be one of the world's most palmy places.

The landscape has changed a great deal during the last few years. Private gardeners started to collect palms; the old botanic garden dramatically improved its collection; private nurseries began producing millions of palms for export; and city governments, and the politicians themselves, became interested in tropical gardens and palms. On top of this, tourism exploded, and the tourists begged for a tropical look. Lastly, a few years ago, work began on a new Palmetum, a palm botanical garden that is still under construction.

## Public Gardens and Streets

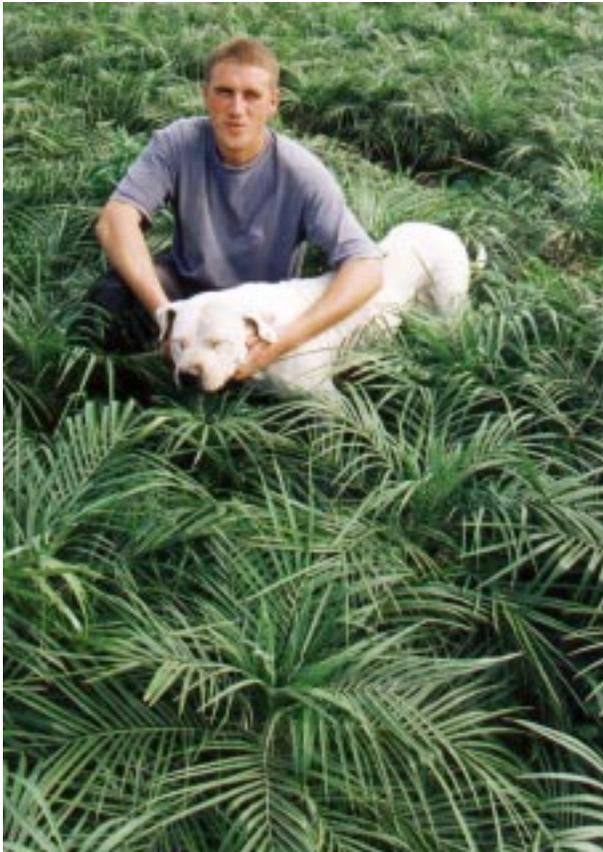
Old palms--palms more than 50 years old--are limited to a few common species with a few exceptions that are chiefly grown at the old Jardín Botánico de La Orotava.

The “old favourites” of Tenerife are *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*, *Howea forsteriana*, *Livistona chinensis*, *Phoenix canariensis*, *P. dactylifera*, *Roystonea regia*, *Trachycarpus fortunei*, *Washingtonia filifera*, and *W. robusta*. In a few squares, one can find *Phoenix rupicola*, *Chamaedorea pochutlensis* and *Howea belmoreana*.

During the 1980's, a few new palm species, such as *Dypsis lutescens* and *Rhapis excelsa*, appeared in public spaces. During the 90's more species became common: *Syagrus romanzoffiana*, *Hyophorbe vershaffeltii*, and *Phoenix roebelenii*. In the last few years, the triangle palm, *Dypsis decaryi*, and the tropical *Veitchia joannis* have joined the show, and upcoming landscaping projects will soon introduce more than 20 new species. Among palms that are now unusual, but which are likely candidates to become “common,” are *Bismarckia nobilis*, *Chambeyronia macrocarpa*, *Hyophorbe lagenicaulis*, *Latania* spp., *Ptychosperma elegans* and *Wodyetia bifurcata*.

## Our Native Palm

There is just one palm species native to the Canary Islands, but thankfully it is one of the largest and most beautiful species of the whole family, and maybe the most spectacular one of all. It is *Phoenix canariensis*. In the wild, *Phoenix canariensis* is much more attractive than it is in cultivation. Although wild populations have been dramatically reduced over the centuries, one can still find wild palm groves, some with hundred-year-old individuals more than 20 m tall. A few years ago, I published an extensive paper, with



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*Top left: Trithrinax acanthocoma in La Orotava Bot. Gdns.*

*Top right: Close-up of a Trithrinax acanthocoma trunk . Pen for scale.*

*Bottom left: Phytelephas macrocarpa with Alejandra Lazzaro in La Orotava.*

*Bottom right: Close-up of a Phytelephas macrocarpa trunk. Pen for scale.*

*This page:*

*Top left: An old Encephalartos laurentianus (below right) rivals a tall Phoenix canariensis in crown size. La Orotava Bot. Gdns.*

*Top right: Trunk of the female specimen of Encephalartos laurentianus with Alejandra. The base is embraced by the epiphytic fern Davallia canariensis.*

*Bottom left: Efrén Hernández Marrero with Turca in a sea of Phoenix roebelenii. A young palm lover who is also commercially growing some new species.*

photographs, on this topic in *Principes*, so I will simply refer those who wish to read more to "Phoenix canariensis in the wild," *Principes*, April 1998 (Vol.42 N.2, pp.85–89, 92–93). Part of this paper is available on the Web at <http://www.palms.org/principes/1998/canariensis.htm>, and you can find the photograph that was featured as the cover of that issue at <http://www.palms.org/principes/1998/pf9804.JPG>.

## The New Palmetum of Santa Cruz de Tenerife

A new botanical garden specializing in palms is being built in the main city of Tenerife, Santa Cruz. Already thousands of palms, representing 400 species, are surprising us with their vigorous growth. I won't describe the Palmetum here, as Jose-Manuel Zerolo has written an article, which will appear in the next issue of *Chamaerops*, in which he describes the Palmetum in detail.

## Jardín Botánico de la Orotava

In Puerto de La Cruz, one of the most popular tourist destinations on the island, there is a botanical garden that is two centuries old. The weather in Puerto de La Cruz is usually cloudy and not too hot. The garden contains more than 150 palm species, among which are some very interesting tropicals and beautiful old specimens of unusual genera. To list all of these would require more space than I am permitted here, but I wish to mention *Cryosophila* sp., *Phytelephas macrocarpa*, *Pritchardia hillebrandtii*, *Pinanga kuhlii* and many uncommon species of *Areca*, *Chamaedorea* and *Roystonea*. Genera from non-tropical climates also perform well there. A huge *Jubaea chilensis* and various species of *Rhopalostylis* and *Trachycarpus* all thrive in the eternal spring.

All this is part of a spectacularly lush vegetation

of ancient tropical trees, Musaceae, Bromeliaceae, cycads and succulents, all of which are worth a visit. There is even a huge, old *Encephalartos laurentianus* that rivals *Phoenix canariensis* in crown size. Recently, the garden acquired a new, very large, empty, adjacent property and will dedicate 10,000 m<sup>2</sup> of this space to American palms.

## Private Gardens

The number of palmophiles on the island is growing rapidly, and they have developed some very beautiful private gardens, which are scattered throughout the islands. These gardens contain the most sought-after palms, such as many species of the delicate genera *Johannesteijsmannia*, *Licuala*, *Beccariophoenix*, and *Pseudophoenix*, all growing outdoors. Because these aficionados have the patience that commercial nurseries lack, they also raise slow-growing, hardier palms such as *Coccothrinax*, *Jubaea* and *Hedyscepe*.

## Our Unofficial Palm Society

There is no local palm society on Tenerife, but during the past two or three years a good-sized group of palm friends has begun to gather from time to time. More than 40 "members" of this informal society meet every few months. We frequently enjoy slide lectures (sometimes about a member's travels in search of palms), and sometimes an overseas visitor will speak to us about his or her specialty or garden. Our palm community is diverse. Of course it includes palm aficionados, but it also includes scientists, nurserymen, students, lecture-addicts and curious "globetrotters." Rather than creating an isolated island chapter, we encourage each other to join other palm societies so we can get "fresh exotic news."

## Nurseries

The production of ornamental plants is a lively industry in the Canaries, and palms are among the most commonly planted ornamentals. Some large nurseries produce huge quantities of common species for export. This is the case with *Rhapis* and *Howea* (*kentia*). Producers in Northern Tenerife maintain several million tall, mature *kentias* to produce seed for this industry. It is hard to believe how many seeds, seedlings, boxes, trolleys, and pots move behind the *kentia* industry. Other less common species are also produced in large quantities. These include *Phoenix roebellenii*, *Dypsis lutescens* and *Hyophorbe verschaffeltii*. Recently, a few nurserymen started to grow unusual palms for collectors. Up to 150 species of mostly young plants can be found in some of these nurseries.

## Palms in the Urban Landscape

I wish to end this essay with a slice of life on the island. I live on the 6th floor of a building in the very heart of Santa Cruz, right in the middle of a pretty and peaceful part of town that is home to offices and shops. People walk down my street 20 hours a day.

Nevertheless, from my balcony I enjoy an absolute minimum temperature of 16°C and the sight of four *Cassia fistula*; two old, branched *Dracaena draco*; an *Adansonia digitata* that is four meters tall; a row of three *Washingtonia*; a long line of 27 *Veitchia joannis* mixed with *V. macdanielsii*; one *Howea forsteriana*; a clump of four *Syagrus romanzoffiana*; and the faraway branch of an olive tree.

A few shrubs native to the Canaries (*Euphorbia obtusifolia*, *Aeonium holochrysum* and *Argyranthemum* spp.) grow beneath one of the dragon trees. There are also six or seven *Delonix regia*, a line of 12 young *Brachychiton acerifolium*,

two *Tipuana tipu* and some 40 *Robinia hispida* that cannot shed their leaves and so look untidy in this “winterless” climate (I find they break the harmony of the general landscape). Groundcovers such as lavenders, ivies, petunias and poinsettias come and go. Parakeets, pigeons and blackbirds fly freely around, and there are human beings everywhere.

I must admit that it actually does rain here, but only 300 mm per year, concentrated in winter. The usual showers can wet your hair slightly, but the drops evaporate before they can reach your scalp. We can get two or three real rains each year, but by the time I decide to buy an umbrella, the rain has stopped and the rainy season is over.

## Acknowledgments

I wish to express my gratitude to Ken Banks, editor of the Palm Society of Hawaii who has patiently revised this article and my English spellings.



# Cyberpalms

*Vince Carr, Northolt, UK*

Editing a Journal such as Chamaerops is not an easy task and combining that task with running and expanding a successful business like The Palm Centre makes it all the more difficult. At times it must seem like a thankless task and so, when Martin Gibbons our Editor asks for contributions from the membership of EPS as he did in Issue No. 39 - Summer 2000 it's time to pull out all the stops and find something to write about. At this point I must apologise to our members whose native languages are other than English and who may lose something of the flavour of this piece in the translation. So my friends, what shall I write about? Why, the Internet of course!

When Chamaerops Summer 2000 was stuffed through my letterbox I was in bed with a respiratory infection and frost lay on the ground. Yes, it was January 15th 2001. Not exactly a good time for outdoor gardening so something else was required as a subject and so whilst checking on-line for new e-mail the Internet slotted into place as the subject matter.

Now, I'm sure that all EPS Members who are Internet enabled and have a command of English will be familiar with our web site at [www.palmsociety.org](http://www.palmsociety.org) and our Editor's palm business at [www.palmcentre.co.uk](http://www.palmcentre.co.uk) and jolly good they are too, but what other resources are available on the Net? The short answer to that is, who can say? Nevertheless, in a very short time it's possible to amass a great deal of information from around the world about Palms, the subject in question.

I believe that in a journal such as Chamaerops there is room for a variety of palm related subject matter, be that of the learned botany variety, the 'guess what I grew in my back garden' variety, or palm related retail therapy. There are some

excellent palm articles and papers on the Internet as well as web sites of other palm societies and some excellent retail sites. Should we include other retail sites in our journal? Yes, I think we should, on the grounds that this enhances the knowledge of our members and it isn't exactly advertising, is it?

So what little treats have I found for you to sample? Let me list just a few of the many items that appealed to me; here goes:-

1. From the Palm & Cycad Societies of Australia a Palm Article about Bonsai Palms. That could open up a whole new way of growing, selling and collecting palms. I can't wait to have a go at Bonsai myself.

<http://www.pacsoa.org.au/palms/articles/BonsaiPalms.html>

2. The Cold-Rating Data Base. This is a useful database listing Genera, Species, Minimum Temperatures and USDA Zones, showing lowest survival temperatures for palms plus access to the statistical report on each species. A very useful reference indeed.

<http://tct.netfirms.com/cgi-bin/crdb/crdblist.cgi?DataBank=Palm>

3. A superb article on *Washingtonia filifera* - Nevada's rejected ancient Palm, where the Native Americans are trying to stop destruction of these native palms of the 'Moapa' region and includes an on-line petition form to complete and help the appeal.

<http://www.xeri.com/Moapa/wf-br-foreword.htm>

4. This one's a splendid paper from our own two learned gentlemen, Martin Gibbons and Tobias W. Spanner entitled The Genus *Trachycarpus* to be found at

[http://www.plantapalm.com/vpe/general/keys/vpe\\_keks1.htm](http://www.plantapalm.com/vpe/general/keys/vpe_keks1.htm)

5. Container Production of Palms by Alan W. Meerow. Although about palm production on the grand scale contains very useful information for the amateur.

<http://www.ftld.ufl.edu/CONPALM.htm>

6. Huw's Pleasure Garden in North Devon UK. Shows you how to grow a pineapple (yes, I know a pineapple ain't a palm).

<http://www.treetops.u-net.com/pineapple.html>

Huw's associated retail therapy site where you can buy Palm Seeds is a must for the palm enthusiast.

<http://www.rosedownmill.freeserve.co.uk>

7. Finally, just one of the many places to search for palm resources is Searching the Internet for Palms at (where there are 74 website links)

<http://www.mahpro.com/palmsch.html>

I hope you find something to interest you at the above locations and I look forward to reading other members' articles or letters related to their own experiences of palm related web surfing. If you find a palm society or business web-site with a guest book or comments box, how about filling it in with your comments and sign off with your name and the legend ..... a member of The European Palm Society - Website at [www.palmsociety.org](http://www.palmsociety.org)

Finally one last point, do you remember when, here in the UK, car registration numbers like ABC 123 or XYZ 789 were available for just a few pounds and now they cost an absolute fortune. Well my friends the same, will be true of Domain Names. If you wish to secure a top level Palm Genus domain name for yourself, your business or organisation you'd better get a move on because domain names are going fast. Firms like GetDotted.com <http://www.getdotted.com> and Domain Express <http://www.domainexpress.co.uk> allow you to search for, purchase and register domain names for reasonable fees and offer domain hosting or domain parking on a similar low cost basis. You could use the name for your own web site or simply as an e-mail address such as [AngelaHouseman@Butia.com](mailto:AngelaHouseman@Butia.com) (fictitious). Some

months ago I purchased the name [Trachycarpus.com](http://Trachycarpus.com) as .com, .net, .org & co.uk are the top level domains and go the quickest. Why, I hear you ask, did I want my own domain name and more particularly *Trachycarpus*.

That's not an easy one to answer in any detail but in conclusion I offer the following lame excuses:-

- A. I wanted it!
- B. I'm a palm enthusiast.
- C. I belong to the European Palm Society.
- D. Why shouldn't I.
- E. There's no law against it!

## Palm Growing in the North West of England

*...continued from page 20*

flowered yet, but it looks as if it will this year. Lots of people want seeds from it.

Lastly, like most people keen on palms, I have a collection of *Trachycarpus*. I have maybe 100 or so *T. fortunei*, both floppy and stiff-leaved versions. I find the stiff-leaved version hardier to below -5°, and I intend to plant some in a wooded area. I own to give it a bit of a different look. I also have one *T. takil*, four *T. nana*, one *T. martinianus*, and one *T. wagnerianus*. Of particular interest are the *T. nana* seedlings, which are kept inside on the dry side. Just one was planted in the wettest, coldest, windiest part of my garden. The one outside is the best colour, and has withstood -10° this year for one night only, but -5° for two or more nights, -1° for 10-15 nights, and rain for more or less the last four or five months. The ground is well drained and has six inches of old farmyard manure (I have horses and chickens) placed around it each year, which does help. It looks in better condition than a three feet high *T. fortunei* with a nine inch-thick trunk after this bad winter, so the others are going outside for good. Keep growing!



# Road to Rio - Part I

*By Martin Gibbons, Ham Central Nursery, Ham Street, Ham, Richmond, Surrey, TW10 7HA, U.K.*

When Brian Trollip (nephew of the famous Steve Trollip of South Africa) and I decided to visit Brazil for a three-week trip over Christmas last year, we had the very best in the way of predecessors. Inge Hoffmann had travelled our planned route some nine or ten years previously, as had Brian's uncle with three friends in a minivan, some four years ago. Both parties had published details of their expeditions, so we were armed with valuable routing tips and with a juicy list of palm species we could expect to find along the way.

After arriving in Rio, we first collected our rental car. Warning: car hire in Brazil is not cheap. Even though we had booked in advance, we still ended up paying £1000 (\$1500) for our 17 days on the road. In these cases, one just has to grin and bear it, and try not to dwell on it too much.

Our trip proper began in Belo Horizonte, Brazil's third largest city after Rio and Sao Paulo, from which we set off at 9 a.m. on Saturday, the 23rd of December. With a good breakfast inside us, we headed northwest towards Itabira, seeing *Acrocomia* and *Syagrus* species along the way. In Itabira we were stranded for an hour by the most torrential downpour! The rain just fell down in a tropical storm of such ferocity that we were forced to call a halt before we had hardly begun. Once the rain stopped, however, the sun appeared in a cloudless blue sky, and the temperature rapidly climbed to around 90 F. (30 C.), where it stayed for most of the rest of our journey. We stayed at Gaunhaes that night and the next day set off for Serro, and between here and Diamantina, we saw the first of many exciting palms that we were to see on our trip. As we rounded a bend, on an outcrop of rocks, *Syagrus glaucescens* was waiting for us. As we approached we saw many more, all growing on or around this rocky hillock, and we stopped to photograph them and check for seeds,

none of which, unfortunately, were ripe.

Quite unlike *Syagrus romanzoffia*, the best known of the genus, *S. glaucescens* grows only to around 10 or 12 feet, and has short, stubby and very stiff leaves, with upward-pointing leaflets, almost cycad-like in appearance. These palms, like the landscape on which they were growing, seemed very old, and one would suspect they are extremely slow-growing. They are scarcely known in cultivation anywhere in the world.

After Diamantina, like Inge before us, we spotted a veritable field of diminutive, blue feather palms that turned out to be *Butia archeri*. With short and thick trunks that had been burned by many bush fires, and grey-blue leaves, they presented an extraordinary sight. We only saw them in this one area, and if that is the only place they grow one would think that their future is not very secure. Should this field be ploughed or otherwise cultivated, that may be the end of these

lovely and again slow-growing palms. Other palms we saw in the same area include *Allagoptera*

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*Page 15: Top: Trunkless Syagrus werdermannii - occasionally seen by the side of the road*

*Bottom left: Syagrus glaucescens - wonderful, stiff leaved relative of the humble Queen palm.*

*Bottom right: Syagrus duartei - very similar to Syagrus glaucescens, experts differ as to its identification and validity.*

*Page 17: Top left: Syagrus coronata - one of the most common palms seen on our trip. There were literally millions of them.*

*Top right: Butia archeri - small palms, mature at only a couple of feet tall. Would make wonderful pot plants*

*Bottom left: Allagoptera breviculix - commonly seen, small palms, growing in colonies and very difficult to photograph!*

*Bottom right: Acrocomia aculeata - tall and spiny palm, not uncommonly seen by the roadside.*



campestris, Queen palms, and but a single *Syagrus flexuosa*, an unusual, suckering species. The countryside around us was quite wonderful, with great rocky outcrops and cliff faces, all demanding to be photographed.

Passing Biribiri and Mendanha, we chose a side road leading to Inhai that took our fancy and, rubber-necking all the while, drove several miles along it. Our patience was rewarded as we came across 30 or 40 *Syagrus duartei* growing together in a grassy meadow. To our eyes it looked very close to *S. glaucescens* and since some authorities describe it as trunkless, there seems to be some confusion here. Anyway, they were wonderful plants indeed. It was starting to get dark by this time, making photography tricky, so we decided to head back to Diamantina for the night and return in the morning. It being Christmas/New Year, the church in this pretty village was lit up with thousands of tiny white light bulbs; an incredible sight in the village square.

We set off early the next morning, stopping at the palms for a good photo session, but further along the road was blocked, so we had to return a second time and abandon hopes of getting to Inhai. Thus we turned left (north) on the main road, towards Turmalina and Minas Novas ("New Mines"). Though it was rather dull from a palm perspective, one never knows what might be waiting around the next corner. In this case, it was the town of Arucaí which straddles the Arucaí River. Here we found a small posada (inn) called Posada Tropical where we stayed for the night, enjoying a very un-Christmassy Christmas supper al fresco in the village square.

Sometimes on palm travels you can drive for an entire day and see nothing, and this was the case here, as we crossed the river again, heading north for Itaobim. This very long drive was relieved, however, by spectacular sandstone hills in bizarre and beautiful shapes. We stopped every so often to take photos, and for lunch, but from a palm point of view, it was very disappointing. And then, suddenly, by the side of the road we saw *Syagrus oleracea*, *Allagoptera leucocalyx* and *S. flexuosa*, all growing together. Our disappointment was forgotten as we admired these rare species.

Pedro Azul (Blue Peter?!) was our stop for that

night, at the Posada Bom Jardim. In town the next morning we bought maps, had a haircut, sent emails, and had breakfast as well, so it was a successful morning. Heading north once again, we were stopped by police for a minor traffic offence, but it was very good natured and we were allowed on our way without even a bribe. On the way to Victoria da Conquista, our immediate destination, we saw many *Syagrus coronata*, and on the later road from Bromado to Caetite we found *S. werdermannii* in great abundance, growing by the roadside and easily accessible. That night we spent in Brumado in a brand new hotel, without a/c, tv or phone, but very cheap, and the steaks were delicious!

From Bromado, we headed east then north again and at a junction a few miles up we found a good population of *Allagoptera campestris*, small, plumose-leaved palms of the cerrado, with seed heads like corn-on-the-cob. Over the next hour or two, as we sped north along a ruler-straight road towards Mucuge, we were to see millions more, hundreds of square miles of them, covering the landscape from horizon to horizon. Yet another example of a palm so common in the wild, yet so inexplicably rare in cultivation. Growing with them, and similar in appearance except for their fierce spines, was *Bactris tucum*, with a maximum height of about three or four feet. The flat landscape then slowly gave way to spectacular scenery with, again, huge outcrops of rock, and at the base of these were growing *Syagrus harleyi* in abundance, together with *amaryllis*, cacti and terrestrial orchids, in sandy soil.

From here it was not far to Andaraí where we stayed at the resort Ecologica, on the river. Superb food, comfortable beds, and the sound of the river ever in the background. Downside: lots of insects and huge toads the size of dinner plates to eat them. Nonetheless a great place to stay and we were sorry to leave the next morning. Our first palms of the day were *Elaeis oleifera*, the American Oil palm (as opposed to *E. guineensis*, the African Oil palm). Soon we had a major change in direction as we met the main west-east highway, and turned right towards the east coast, Salvador, the sea, and part two of our Brazilian adventure.

# Puzzling Questions for a New Palm Enthusiast

*Ivan Hares, Spring Cottage, 141 London Road,  
Cowplain, Waterlooville, Hants. PO8 8XJ, U.K.*

I am a new member of the European Palm Society and have, until now, never felt the urge to write to any magazine. This is not due to a lack of hobbies, as my interests range from astronomy to watergardening. The reason why I am putting pen to paper now is because I have never before needed to know the answers to so many puzzling questions concerning such a seemingly mysterious subject, where there is equal scope for great success and miserable failure.

I have been interested in growing palms for about a year and, after managing to kill a succession of coconut seedlings (the usual fate for this palm when kept as a house plant, I'm told), I decided to try some easier subjects, such as *Kentia*, *Chamaedorea*, etc. While all of these seem to be happy, I am a bit concerned about my *Lytocaryum weddellianum*. I bought it about six months ago as a two-year-old plant and (I found out later not to do this) repotted it as a delicate seedling! It survived and has since almost doubled in size, now measuring a foot in height, and will one day need a bigger pot. How can I do this without damaging the roots, which I understand results in the death of the plant? I also have a *Phoenix canariensis*, approximately four feet high, as a house plant, which is in and out of the house in good weather. It seems to be growing quite fast and will eventually be planted out.

Late last year I bought a *Trachycarpus fortunei* (35 litre) and a *Chamaerops humilis* (15 litre), which I repotted immediately (again, as I now understand, not the best thing to do). Both, however, survived the winter well and continued

to grow, though I'm not sure if that's a good thing or not. The *Chamaerops* has many suckers, some of which I would like to remove in order to shape the plant and propagate new plants. What is the best procedure for doing this without causing any fatalities? In April I bought a *Butia capitata* in a 35 litre pot that was bulging at the seams. It is a good size with approximately two dozen old leafstalk remnants, and it has four large fronds with two more on the way. As it appeared to need a larger pot, I decided to repot it. The pot I used for this, and the *Trachycarpus*, was a 75 litre plastic builder's bucket (modified with drain holes) with rope handles (excellent value from Wickes). I wasn't too concerned about the aesthetics as it is my intention to put them in the ground next year. However, after reading about "pot planting" (an idea I like), I am not entirely convinced these extremely tough and indestructible-looking pots would be able to split and let sufficient roots out. (Is that how it works? Maybe someone can explain the mechanics of it to me?) At any rate, they are somewhat beyond the ideal five gallon size! Having said that, if it works, I'm all for it. I can't think of an easier way of planting them, especially taking into consideration the weight and possible damage factor.

I have some plans for the garden, still very much in the embryo stage at the moment, which include digging out another pond but with an exotic theme, using palms (of course) and other plants such as *Cordyline*, *Phormiums*, *Fatsia*, *Bamboo* and *Bananas*. Wish me luck!



# Palm Growing in the North West of England

By George Oaks, 57 Abbey Road, St Mary's, Cheshire WA3 1EP, U.K.

Many years ago, while on holiday in Italy, I became interested in palms. I picked up a few seeds, which were scattered over the ground beneath most of the trees, and put them in my pocket thinking, "I'll give them a try." That was 25 years ago.

I forgot about the seeds, two *Phoenix canariensis* and one *Chamaerops humilis*, until the following year when I was cleaning out a lot of old pots from my greenhouse. It was a quite cold February day and very frosty. I was looking at a broken pane of glass with a corner missing when I noticed this grass-like leaf about two inches high sticking up from the soil in one of the pots. It was thick with ice. I left it alone, just to see if it would grow. It did!

It turned out to be the *Chamaerops*, and I am pleased to say it is still with me. It is now over five feet, two inches tall with a spread of over three feet, and a nice, thick, yellow-green trunk. I keep it to a single trunk just like its parents in the main street of Pompei, "the dead city." It is growing outside in a raised bed along with my *Trachycarpus fortunei*.

The two *Phoenix* grew the following spring. I left one outside and lost it, but the other is still with me. It grew very slowly, but is now about eight feet tall with a one foot trunk. It is kept outside all year except when the temperature falls below zero; then it is housed in my conservatory. Being too heavy to lift, it is in a large tub with rope handles bought from the local supermarket, which makes it very easy to drag.

The *Chamaerops*, now over 25 years old, flowered for the first time this year. Another is 30 years old but smaller, probably because it came

without roots from a building site in Spain. This one also flowered, but seeds were not produced, making me believe they are both the same sex. I have two others, one a yellow-leaved form named "Volcano" that will possibly reach five feet in another 50 years, and a blue-leaved form about which I know nothing. The 30 or more year-old plant, although only 18 inches tall, is the most beautiful palm I have, being in almost perfect shape. Coming from the wild, it takes no looking after at all, and I think it is just happy to be alive with roots again. (It took two years for it to grow them again.)

The rest of my collection, all of which are grown from seed, include Queen palm, *Butia Capitata*, *Livistona australis*, *Washingtonia filifera* and *robusta*, *Rhopalostylis sapeda*, *Chamaerops costaricana*, *Sabal minor*, and, if they germinate, *Jubea chilensis* (they have been in pots a year and I am still waiting for some movement). I have also a collection of three types of *Cordylines*, but this year's frost has given them a beating.

All my palms, which are in pots, are kept outside from March to November, and do better outside than in. The *Chamaedorea costaricana* loves it outside in a shaded part where it can be blown in the wind. It also likes the rain, and has gone from a £2.99 plant in a two and a half inch pot to a £299. plant growing in a two feet, six inch pot. It has grown into a clump of palms as wide as it is tall, at over three feet. It has not

...continued on page 14

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*Top left: A palm imposter.*

*Top right: Ensete ventricosum, the Abessinian Banana.*

*Bottom left: Mature Hedyscepe with unripe fruit.*

*Bottom right: A young Coconut palm.*



# Letters

## Paschalococos

Carlo Morici's article 'Paschalococos and the Disappearing Palms' prompted me to share a conversation I had on the same subject. During my recent trip to Chile, I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Juan Grau, a specialist in asthma, who at the age of 84 is still practising. Apart from this he is an expert in a number of fields including palms, pollution, semi-precious stones, the language of Easter Island, and the chinchilla, which he was instrumental in saving from extinction. We had a long conversation about palms in general and then about *Jubaea chilensis*. He is of the opinion, which he told me is now shared by most historian-botanists, that the palm which is now extinct on Easter Island is not a 'new' species but is identical with *Jubaea* itself. The populations there were probably cut down many years ago by the natives who used the trunks as huge rollers to move the famous statues from quarry to final standing place. He has had 4 mature *Jubaeas* flown there (courtesy of the Chilean Air Force) and re-planted in the soil of Easter Island, along with, some years previously, 100 seedlings which were distributed and planted around the island itself. Perhaps one day Easter Island will boast its original number of these wonderful palms.

*Martin Gibbons*

## Palm Conservation

I found the article "Conservation Through Cultivation" very interesting as it highlighted the possibility for palm enthusiasts to help keep a wide palm gene pool. An underlying premise of the article is the need for palms to be more widely planted. Part of the reason why more hardy palms are not planted is that most people think they won't survive cold conditions. This misconception

is made worse when many reputable gardening books contain defective information. For example, my recent edition of the RHS A-Z Encyclopaedia of Garden Plants gives the following information:

1. *Butia capitata* - half hardy to frost tender - minimum 5-10°C.
2. *Chamaerops humilis* - Half hardy - min 0°C.
3. *Phoenix canariensis* - Minimum 16°C.

Perhaps the only way we can counter the inaccurate underestimate of the hardiness of many palms is to show the general public what the truth is; as they say, "seeing is believing." In the U.K., a few enlightened local Councils have planted a modest number of hardy palms. If members could donate the odd palm each, we could create some model palm beds in municipal gardens in the larger cities of Europe. By posting the locations of these plantings on the EPS website, people could easily locate the nearest municipal garden containing these palms.

Depending upon the hardiness of the palms, naturalised groves of endangered species could be planted in appropriate climates. Once again, public gardens could be used.

If other members write in showing their willingness to donate palms or time to plant them, perhaps the viability of the idea can be gauged.

*Martyn Graham, 123 Benhill Road, Sutton, Surrey SM1 3SB, U.K.*

## More Interesting Gardens of Tenerife

It was interesting for us to read Michael Carter's recent article on the splendid palms and other exotic plants that can be seen in the northeast of Tenerife, around Puerto de la Cruz. We, too, visited the area in 1999, in March and in November, and were thrilled at the variety of plants to view.

In the Botanic Gardens at Puerto we counted over one hundred different palm species, many of them semi- or fully mature specimens. There is a small "outpost" of this garden a few miles away, in the beautiful town of La Orotava, with more fine

# Shop

palms, treeferns, and exotic under-plantings.

Perhaps even more exciting, palm-wise, was our visit to a smaller garden, the "Jardin Las Tosquillas," situated half-way between Puerto and La Laguna. Begun in 1957, this garden is devoted almost exclusively to palms and Tillandsias. Finding this amazing garden is worth the effort, as the collection of palms is outstandingly beautiful and well-labeled. It was stunning to wander between fruiting *Hedyscepes* and *Howeas* or sit on a terrace shaded by dozens of *Washingtonias*! There were many medium-sized specimens of *Sabals*, *Braheas*, and *Bismarckias*, and some fine cycads. We also saw hundreds of *Tillandsias*, some growing on nets shading the palms.

Fine palms can also be found in two other beautiful gardens in or near Puerto. A free coach or taxi will take you the short distance to "La Bananera". An interesting garden where you can see coffee, cacao, kapok, papaya, and custard apple trees planted among *Strelitzias*, *Aloes*, *Agaves* and cacti, as well as many of the indigenous species of the island. A free banana liquor and *Strelitzia* flower are included in the price!

"Sitio Litre" is one of the oldest houses on the island, and is now surrounded by the suburbs of Puerto. Its garden has a lovely display of orchids and a wide range of sub-tropical plants. It's a peaceful place to sit and sip a reviving drink while admiring a huge "dragon tree."

During our second stay on the island we visited Icod de las Vinos, to the east of Puerto, where there is a huge and ancient *Dracena draco*, around which a botanical garden dedicated to the island's indigenous plants has recently been created. These plants have their own beauty and can easily be seen in the wild while driving or walking around the island, which has a varied and spectacular landscape.

*Carol and Alan Hawes*

## Send your letters to:

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Ham Street, Ham  
Richmond, Surrey, TW10 7HA, UK  
e-mail: mail@palmsociety.org

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