

Pritchardia

December 2020 Newsletter

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HAWAII ISLAND PALM SOCIETY

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President's Message



I have to believe that everyone is relieved that 2020 is done. This is the kind of year that makes one appreciate that we live on a beautiful island far away from the rest of the world.

Next year will bring the widespread distribution of covid-19 vaccines, and hopefully a strong economic recovery. And a return to garden tours! It looks like HIPS will have spent about 18 months in hibernation before we can resume activities. Although everything is subject to change, we are hoping that vaccines will be available to the general public in Hawaii by the summer. If that happens, we plan on resuming garden tours after Labor Day. We can't promise whether we will be able to bring in an outside palm expert for a UHH lecture, but we will do the best we can.

This timeline makes holding our annual February banquet and rare palm auction impossible. Earlier in the year we developed alternative plans to hold the auction at an outdoor venue that would allow good ventilation and ample spacing. Unfortunately, the county's current covid-19 emergency regulations prohibit any gathering of more than ten people either indoors or outside. Although that size limit might be relaxed between now and February, we cannot move forward with planning under the current restrictions. This is very disappointing for all of us. I understand that everyone is hungry for more palms, so we will work towards holding a member plant exchange in the fall once pandemic conditions allow.

Although everyone focuses on the palm auctions in February, a second important function of the meeting is electing new officers, and I use 'new' very loosely here. Most of the current officers and board member have agreed to continue into 2021 with the exception of our departing vice president, Rick Jones. Rick and his wife will be relocating to the mainland. We have not identified a candidate to replace Rick, so if you are interested, please contact me. Our By Laws require annual officer elections, but we hope everyone is forgiving about the exact timing since we are prohibited from meeting in person. We will most likely hold a vote in conjunction with our first in person gathering next fall.

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I know everyone wants to resume our warm, friendly social activities as soon as possible. That is the main attraction of island life. But we all need to remain vigilant for another six months or so. Stay safe. Hope to see you all very soon in person.

Rick Kelley

Update on 2021 Events

February 2021 Annual Dinner and Palm Auction Cancelled.

We regret having to cancel our premier event of the year due to restrictions on indoor and outdoor group size. The annual confirmation of officers will be held at a future in-person event, contingent on restrictions being lifted. The proposed slate of officers, with the exception of vice president, are the same as 2020: President Rick Kelley, Treasurer Chris Friesen, and Secretary Mike Arends. Membership Secretary (not an officer position) is held by Lise Dowd. We are currently looking for a volunteer for Vice President. The chief job of Vice President is to stand in for the president at events

or meetings in the event of the president's absence. We are seeking someone personable, enthusiastic, and comfortable speaking in front of people. We also welcome volunteers to join the board as members at large. Board members and the Vice President are expected to attend quarterly board meetings, help out at society events, and occasionally may be asked to head an event or initiative that may interest them. If you are interested, please contact Rick Kelley at rickkelley@att.net

Free International Palm Society Webinars

The International Palm Society has created an excellent online webinar series connecting their members in over 80 countries to some of the most renowned researchers in the field of Palms. The best thing about these webinars is that they are included at the new Free membership level and they are recorded so that you can watch them on demand. Become a member at any level, and start watching now by clicking [HERE](#).

Some of the Webinars Available:

 <p>Webinar Larry Noblick November 18th 4pm EDT</p> <p>WEBINAR - THE INTERESTING LIFE OF A PALM BIOLOGIST WITH LARRY NOBLICK</p>	 <p>Webinar Dr. William J. Baker November 18th 4pm EDT</p> <p>WEBINAR - EXPLORING THE PALMS OF NEW GUINEA WITH DR. WILLIAM J. BAKER</p>	<p>Dr. Dransfield and the Madagascar Giant Suicide Palm</p>  <p>Webinar Dr. James Dransfield November 19th 4pm EDT</p>
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The Palms of Colombiawith Dr. Rodrigo Bernal



The Palms of Cuba with Paul Craft



A Garden of Eatin': Palm Recipes

Many people are rediscovering their kitchens, experimenting with sourdough or perfecting banana bread. I explored breadfruit in both its savory and sweet variations for a while. So I thought this might be a good time to venture into the extraordinary world of edible palms.

Before we go further, we need to address the coconut in the room. There is no way to skip “The Tree of Life” *Cocos nucifera* when talking about edible palms. Nothing comes close to its cultural importance, versatility, and deliciousness. Even in cold climates where it can’t possibly grow, it has shown up in recipes for generations. I’d like to focus this article however on the up and coming edible palms.

Borassus flabellifer (Palmyra Palm, Toddy Palm, Ice Apple)

Equally versatile and widely popular, though it hasn’t reached the global status of the coconut yet, the fruit of the sugar palm *Borassus flabellifer* is widely eaten.

According to [Palmpedia](#), it is found in Bangladesh, Cambodia, South and Central China, India, Java, Laos, Lesser Sunda Island, Malaya, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Sulawesi, Thailand and Vietnam. It’s original habitat is hard to determine because it has travelled with humans and been traded for centuries. It is a spectacular large fan palm with big beautiful fruits.



Like coconuts, the fruit can be harvested at different times – the glassy like kernel is painstakingly extracted when the fruit is young, the yellow fibrous pulp is also extracted with a lot of work from the mature fruit.



Mature Palmyra fruit.



Glassy kernel in young fruit.

The photos above are from Caroline Radhakrishnan's website [Currylines](https://www.currylines.com/) where you can learn more about how these fruits are processed in India.

One of my great finds during this pandemic are the YouTube videos from Mark Wiens who travels throughout the world looking for great things to eat. He has a fantastic [video](#) from Thailand showing the different preparations of Palmyra fruit and how they taste.



If you don't have *Borassus flabellifer* in your garden or don't want to spend the time prying out the glassy kernel, you can get the canned fruit on Amazon.com. While canned pulp and dried pulp are produced in Sri Lanka, I wasn't able to find a reasonable source online.



Hearts of Palm

If you want to grow palms for their delicious heart, grow multi-stemmed species like the spineless variety of Peach Palm, *Bactris gassipes* or *Euterpe oleracea*. But you can harvest heart of palm from many species, although some are tastier than others. So if you need to thin out your garden because you over planted, here is a convenient [article from the New York Botanical Garden](#) that provides a table of palm species and their taste. I've heard that *Archontophoenix* is bitter, which is too bad for those wanting to cull out volunteer alexander palms.

Unfortunately over-harvesting wild heart of palm is threatening many single-trunked species throughout the tropics. Few of us would dream of eating our *Dypsis saintelucei*, but wild harvesting of palm heart has put it on the IUCN Red List in Madagascar, along with many other garden beauties including *Voanioala gerardii* and *Leurophoenix halleuxii*.

Most of the industry has moved to more sustainable practices and some have adopted some creative solutions like harvesting heart when replacing old coconut trees on coconut plantations in the Philippines and Thailand, and African Oil Palms (*Elais guineensis*) on plantations in Malaysia. Some Floridians eat the single trunked Cabbage Palm, *Sabal palmetto*. Though it is a native, it is encroaching on panther habitat in pine flatwoods and wildlife managers have taken to clearing the palms and donating the palm hearts to local chefs at Cabbage Palm Festivals.

If you don't want to harvest your own garden, fresh heart of palm should be readily available on Hawaii as it is home to some very large growers including [Wailea Agricultural Group](#). I used to get my palm hearts from [Paradise Plants](#), though I'm not sure they still sell it.

Pan Seared Hearts of Palm



- Cut the palm heart into 1-1.5" disks.
- Heat about a tablespoon of olive oil in a pan over medium high heat
- Place disks in pan and sprinkle them with your favorite spice mix, I use McCormick's steak seasoning
- Sear, flipping when the bottom is brown.
- Serve as you would scallops, on rice, in linguine, or on top of a salad

Mark Wiens has another fun video on [eating a Fishtail palm in Thailand](#).



Peach Palm Fruit with Mayonnaise – a Costa Rican National Snack

- Drop cleaned peach palm fruit in boiling water for an hour and a half.
- Remove, cool, and peel
- Serve slices with mayonnaise



Salacca zalacca, Snake Fruit



According to Palmpedia, *Salacca zalacca* is cultivated in Thailand, throughout Malaysia and Indonesia as far as the Moluccas, and has been introduced into New Guinea, the Philippines, Queensland (Australia), Ponape Island (Caroline Archipelago) and reportedly occurs on the Fiji Islands.



In Indonesia snake fruit is eaten right off the tree. The hardest part about doing this is getting the fruit off the tree without coming away with a bloody paw. The next hardest part is peeling the fruit without slicing open your fingers. If you grow Salacca and want to harvest your fruit, [there is a trick](#) to save your fingers when opening the skin.

I bet you are wondering if Mark Wiens has a video about snake fruit. This Mark Wiens video shows how to make a Thai snake fruit salad and compares [Salak and Ramak snake fruit](#).

There are more edible palm fruits, if you have stories or recipes you want to share, email me at marylock@sbcglobal.net.

Gunnar Hillert's Involved Hobbies



Gunnar visiting Floribunda Palms for the first time.

There is a curious underlying organization to Gunnar Hillert's involved hobbies. In his software engineering career he championed the JAVA programming language and was president of the JAVA Users' Group in Atlanta for 6 years before moving to Holualoa to grow his own java on a 4 acre coffee farm. He participates in Kona IRONMAN competitions finishing in 12h 41min in 2019, and now he is building his own iron man - a somewhat affordable high precision (1-2cm vs 3-10 m on a phone) global navigation satellite system to map his plants in his garden. I've only talked with Gunner a few times and already I can say that he doesn't do things in half measures; he is all in! Luckily he chose Hawaii over Panama or Costa Rica when he was searching for a tropical locale for his home base, having already been working remotely since 2011. In 2016 he and his family moved to Hawaii from Atlanta Georgia and soon after he became a HIPS member.



Gunnar's high precision GNSS prototype.

Gunnar is a strong believer in sharing information and technology and has posted his [recent talk at the SpringOne 2020 Developer's Conference](#) on high precision GPS including video and demo code. He also posted a [parts list](#) for his prototype. The goal of his garden labelling project is to map his garden and maintain a database of plant information following botanical garden information standards.



But most folks are likely to find his actual real world garden even more impressive. HIPS is hoping for a tour perhaps in 2022. The property was previously owned by Mike Renner and Marian Solomon and won the Betty Crocker Landscape Awards - Award of Excellence (Private Gardens) in 2012. While the garden contained an incredible variety of ornamental plants and fruit trees when he bought it, Gunnar says the variety of palms was extremely limited. To fix this unimaginable oversight, over the past 4 years he has planted over a hundred palms and more are coming.



Gunnar's garden showing the young palms ready to take the garden to new heights of beauty.

In a recent email I asked Gunnar how he came to like palms.

“Growing up in East-Germany, tropical locales were out of reach but for some reason I liked to draw palms as a child and was always drawn to exotic places.”

In 2001 he moved to Atlanta, Georgia with his wife, Alysa.

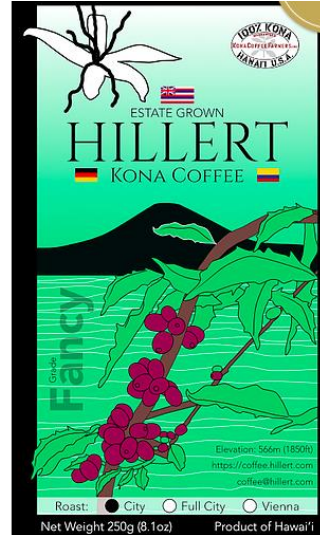
“At that time you would typically only encounter palm trees in the Atlanta Botanical Garden (<https://atlantabg.org/>) Anyway, it was quite fascinating to learn that you can grow several species of cold-hardy palms and (ornamental) bananas:

- Sabal minor
- Sabal minor var. Louisiana
- Sabal uresana
- Trachycarpus fortunei
- Rhipidophyllum hystrix

As a software developer, getting my hands dirty, growing physical things and learning a totally different field of expertise has been quite rewarding. Eventually I turned the outside of our townhome into a miniature jungle . . . followed by protracted fun with our HOA.

I also joined The Southeastern Palm Society (<http://sepalms.org/>) and started to get to know the community of palm enthusiasts. “

In 2016 Gunnar, Alysa and their two children Leah (12) and Franz (10) moved to their coffee estate above Kona. Gunnar completed the Master Gardener program in 2018 and attends the Hawaii Tropical Fruit Growers (<https://www.htfg.org/>) association meetings. You can check out Gunnar’s lovely [Hillert Coffee website](#) for more peeks into his garden and a look into his small batch coffee roasting process. I can’t wait until the next batch is available, the packaging is beautiful.



Note from the editor:

This newsletter goes out quarterly (more or less), the next newsletter will go out March 31st. If you have any questions, comments, or would like to contribute to the production of the newsletter, contact Mary Lock at marylock@sbcglobal.net.