

Pritchardia

March 2023 Newsletter

Issue #37



President's Message



Aloha palm lovers,

It looks like I'll be serving as the HIPS president this year.

I'm really proud to be able to say that because our Palm Society does some wonderful work in our community and supports some great projects. In addition to hosting the annual plant sale, facilitating garden tours, supporting the Panaewa Zoo, and hosting guest speakers, HIPS actively supports research and conservation efforts across the globe.

I was first introduced to the Hawaii Island Palm Society by a friend and mentor over 15 years ago. I got to visit a few gardens that year, but it was a seminar where I got to see Don Hodel and, I believe, Jeff Marcus, talk about loulu (*Pritchardia*) that hooked me. The combined experience sparked my interest in conservation and prompted me to reevaluate my perspective on the principals of residential landscape design.

Several years later I found myself supervising high school seniors in San Diego as they implemented, from start to finish, a small Creekside habitat restoration project. I was reflecting on the potential impacts the project could have on the students' futures and I paused and reflect on my own path. It became clear to me that HIPS had changed my trajectory.

Not long after the *Pritchardia* lecture I was employed through BIISC (Big Island Invasive Species Committee and Malama O Puna working on a marine life habitat restoration project in Puna. When that project was completed, I moved to California where my wife and I started a landscape contracting company that specialized in upgrading existing residential landscapes with more modern (and less wasteful) irrigation systems and installing plant material that was more appropriate for the areas climate and ecology.

Had it not been for the Hawaii Island Palm Society I am not sure how successful or fulfilling my career might have been. Now that I am home in Hawaii, I am honored to have the opportunity to give back to an organization that has given me so much.

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I know I've got some big shoes to fill. I'd like to thank past presidents Bo Lundkvist & Don Hemmes for their kindness and inspiration as well as congratulate Rick Kelly and the rest of the board for putting together some stellar garden tours this year.

Appropriate for the HIPS golden anniversary, we will have the opportunity to visit the gardens of some of our founding members and longtime contributors. I'm really excited for this year's tours and I'm looking forward to meeting more of you at these events.

-Miles

The Rutan Garden in Onomea Saturday, April 29th

It is fitting that the first garden tour in 2023 is a piece of the legendary estate of Don Carlsmith. Don was a founder and the first president of the Hawaii Island Palm Society. Don was also president of the International Palm Society between 1978 and 1980 and on the board of the National Tropical Botanical Garden. Michelle and Ryan Rutan's garden harbors beautiful species of palms that have grown to unbelievable size over the past five decades. Michelle and Ryan are generously welcoming HIPS into their garden in April, keeping a tradition of garden tours that dates back over 43 years.



International Palm Society members scamper under the impossibly large canopy of *Marojejya darianii* and romp among the stilt roots of *Socratea durissima*. Photos from the Rutan's website HanaiFarm.com

A few of our members might remember the 1980 IPS Hawaiian Biennial when the Carlsmith estate was the grand finale to the first day. According to the [trip report on the IPS website](#), the early garden already had about 275 species of palm.





The distinctive trunk of *Chrysalidocarpus carlsmithii*. Photo from the Rutan's website HanaiFarm.com

When the Carlsmith Estate was subdivided, Jeff Marcus helped move the type specimen for *Dypsis carlsmithii* (now *Chrysalidocarpus carlsmithii*) from another part of the estate to what would be Michelle and Ryan's garden. This new species was described by John Dransfield and Jeff Marcus in 2002 from that single specimen in the Carlsmith garden. Later, two wild populations of the critically endangered palm were found in Madagascar. HIPS members can see the palm once known in cultivation as sp. "stumpy" towering over the garden today.

Through Charmin Akina, a close family friend of the Carlsmith's, HIPS and the IPS were able to visit the garden in 2004 and 2015. Rick Kelley tracked down Michelle and Ryan soon after they purchased the property, and before the couple and their two daughters even moved to Hawaii, they agreed to open their garden to the IPS last October.

HIPS is very grateful to the Rutans, who are now members of HIPS and learning more about their palm collection. For more photos, [visit their website](#). You will not want to miss this opportunity, so save the date. A formal announcement will go out via email. There will be a couple of volunteer work days scheduled to help the Rutans uncover treasures in the garden. A call for volunteers will be sent out via email with further details.



A striking row of *Bismarkia nobilis*. Photo by Michael Lock 2015

2023 Garden Tours

Saturday, April 29 th	Michelle and Ryan Rutan's Onomea Garden (former Carlsmith Estate)
Saturday, May 20 th	Cindy and Jerry Andersen's Leilani Estates Garden
Saturday, July 15 th	Casa de las Palmas, Hilo – Irene Francis and Lars Woodruff
TBD Fall	Jan Anderson's Orchidland Garden

For more information about garden tours and other events, [visit our Events page](#).

2023 Annual Meeting and Auction Results

It was great seeing everyone at the Imiloa Astronomy Center for our annual meeting and palm auctions. Your support allows us to offer garden tours, lectures, and community outreach events that spark curiosity and passion for the wonderful world of palms. It also allows us to support palm research and conservation efforts locally and around the world.



*From Left, clockwise: Steve Foreman conscripted to sell t-shirts, a sign of hope – *Hyophorbe indica* once rare in cultivation and threatened in the wild generously offered for free, a few people take a closer look at live auction palms before the bidding starts, President Miles probably thinking of all the things HIPS can do with the money Chris Friesen (in background) is collecting, Karl Mendonca and Lars Woodruff having fun, the beautiful floral arrangement by Sara Wagner at the buffet table. Photos by Sara Wagner*



Congratulations and thank you to outgoing president Rick Kelley for his exceptional organizational skills and nimble planning during a challenging four year term, navigating two years of pandemic ups and downs to keep our social society connected and safe.

And welcome to our new incoming president J.R. Miles!

It takes a lot of planning and work to pull off an evening of fun, and it takes a lot of dedicated volunteers. Thanks to board members Rick Kelley, Sara Wagner, Chris Friesen, Gunnar Hilert, Lise Dowd, Mary Lock, Mike Arrends, Bob Carrere, Bob Ferrazi, and Karl Mendonca. Thanks to member volunteers Steve Foreman, Ed Arrends, and Amy Friesen. We couldn't have done this without you.

We are incredibly grateful to those who contributed palms for the silent and live auctions:

Jeff Marcus
Bob Davis
Tim Brian
Jerry Andersen
Mike Merritt

Don Hemmes
Ken Beilstein
Bob Carrere
Charlie Johnson
Tony Armstrong

Rick Kelley
Rob Talbert
Karl Mendonca
Jerry Enslow



Left to right: The long row of live auction palms, Rick Kelley coaxing another \$5 from the bidders as Jeff Marcus readies the next palm in the line up, a closer look at some of the live auction beauties.

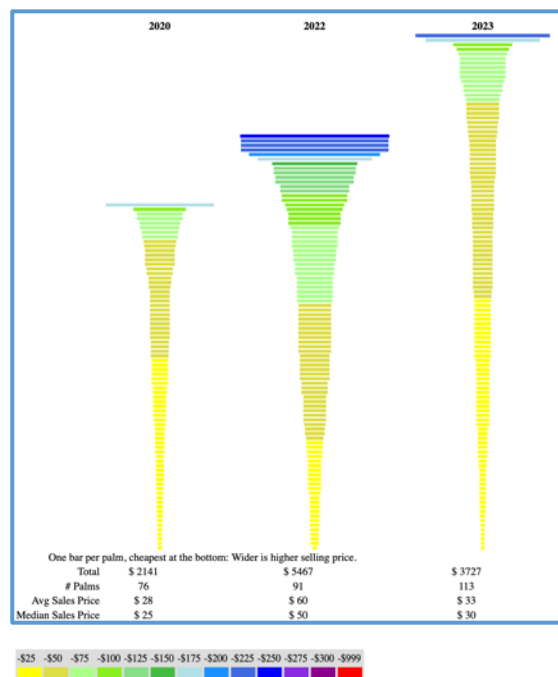
A special thanks goes out to our treasurer Chris Friesen who put in a lot of time to optimize the check-in and auction processes, and made sure people got the palms and plants they paid for.

Chris prepared a great summary of the numbers and graphs:

The silent auction sales were lower than last year (average price \$33 vs \$60 last year) but the live auction prices were higher (\$150 average vs \$94 last year). We didn't quite hit last year's out-of-the-ballpark gross sales of \$7342, but the \$6732 we collected is still lots higher than \$3936 from 3 years ago.

Take a look at the following graphs, they show one bar per plant sold, sorted by lowest price at the bottom. The graph on the right shows the silent auction with many less expensive plants.

Silent Auction Palms



This second graph shows the relatively few but more expensive live auction palms.

Live Auction Palms



Managing a Palm Forest



Sometimes the scale of work in a large mature palm garden can be very daunting. Last month's extended periods of high winds that alternated between eastern Tradewinds and westerly Konawinds, was coupled with heavy rain and brought unexpectedly harsh localized damage. The wind at my house brought down a few branches from the rainbow eucalyptus, but only 15 minutes away in the palm forest at [The Merwin Conservancy](#) the damage was heart wrenching. The winds snapped a tall *Chrysalidocarpus leptocarpus* in two, and decapitated a *Syagrus sancona*, the vulnerable palms having emerged out of the canopy and relative protection of the valley.



Left: *Chrysalidocarpus leptocarpus*, Right: *Syagrus sancona*



The large leaves of an Arenga stem, the trunk easily a foot in diameter caught the wind and smashed a few lovely mid story palms on its way down. Right: With careful chainsaw work some of a graceful Arenga engleri cluster was saved.



A very tall ironwood, nearly unrecognizable being covered almost completely in a rain soaked large invasive philodendron came crashing down, in turn taking out a 50 ft avocado tree and 25 ft milo tree. The avocado tree was left resting on the head of one of the garden's loveliest 12 ft Carpoxydon.

Surveying the damage, it was clear that the job was far too big and dangerous for our gardeners Walter and Jon. We hired a specialty tree climbing crew of arborists to safely take down the propped up trees and address remaining hazards. The massive scale of the clean-up is seen in these photos. The overall view is seen in the photo to the left, and the circle is the close up view shown below.



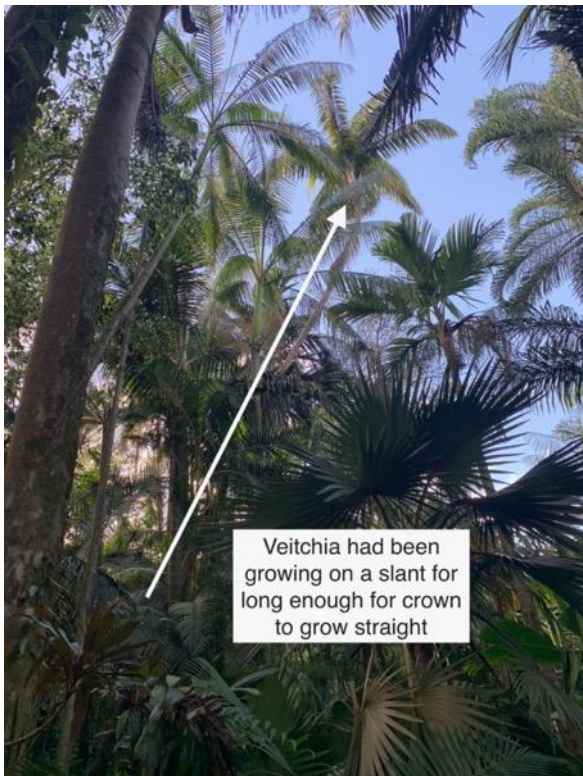


The climbing crew was able to address some hazards proactively, like taking down this skeleton of a hala tree smothered in a mass of philodendron pictured on the left.

If you have large philodendrons growing up the trees in your garden, you might think about how you might be able to avoid our troubles before you have to incur hefty expenses or suffer damage.

In the photos below, you can see the very tall *Veitchia* sp. near the main path leading from the potting shed to the main house leaning out to catch the sun. We noticed the ground was sliding down slope from the weight of the tree and the rain water was undercutting roots on the side. We decided to play it safe and remove the tree. Luckily I took a break and was not around to see the nerve racking climb up to the crown and the bouncing that happened as the heavy leaves were released one by one.

A heavy philodendron laddened hala limb leans precariously over a main path.



The trunk and leaves were a sad remnant of one of the first palms planted on the property nearly four decades ago.

Sun shines in the clearing carved out of the garden, and palm leaves are set off by bright blue sky. A few tall palms with defiant central spears rising from broken hanging leaves still stand. Only time will tell if a new leaf will emerge or if the growing point was dealt a fatal blow.

Strangely it is easy to move from grief to hope and think about the area as a place for new plantings. Like a tree fall in a true rainforest, life springs up as light reaches the dark forest floor.

Note from the editor:

This newsletter goes out quarterly (more or less), the next newsletter will go out June 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.