

A.S.G.A.P. CYCAD, ZAMIAD AND PALM STUDY GROUP
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This will probably be the last newsletter for the current year, so here is wishing you all a great festive season and greater involvement, study-wise in 1995 (dare I hope).

One thing if you change your address, please let me know clearly, also please at least once a year write me to say you are alive, interested still, or even asking for improvement.

Also lets have subs. paid in June in future, not July to December as it is now with at least half the group. The other half, my grateful thanks please accept.

Just a few tips as to what we all must now study. *Seed* germination, times for germination, methods that you have found successful to date, speed of growth of your plants, comments you may have seen in newspapers, magazines etc., re the cycad family conservation articles of even the lack of it.

Seems there is a chance there may be another study group, leaders involvement in 1995 in Victoria, not much news on it as yet.

Cheerio, Len.

Cycas Brunnea - the (Lawn Hill sp.)

Here at long last some clarification of another species known by the Lawn Hill common name and often referred to in the past as another form of *Cycas angulata*. Back as far as 1972 there is a sighting listed by Maconochie but it was properly described by Ken Hill in 1992.

Reports have come in over the years from various researchers both in P.A.C.S.O.A. and the A.S.G.A.P. study group of this cycas and mostly it was past over as probably an intergraded cross of *C. angulata*. However now we know the specific differences are, broader flatter pinnae to the rachis, and wider spacing of these, the generally more strongly glaucous blueleaf fronds and the smaller seed. The new naming, *brunnea* refers to the pronounced brown, trichome hairs on all the new growth a distinguishing feature.

This cycas is a medium to rather large plant generally being two to three metres in height, but my reports mention specimens up to 6 metres in the sheltered forested gullies. Also the foliage of these latter plants is grey green rather than glaucous hue, later becoming in full maturity, blue green to grey green depending on their climatic exposure. The pinnae as in the case of many of these blue taxa is strongly vee-ed on the rachis. The emerging crown of young frond leaves is light blueish and heavily covered with chocolate brown trichome hairs. Observers report 160 to 240 pinnae to a mature frond narrowing to small, yellow spines on the petiole. Pinnae being 7.5 mm. wide slightly recurved and flattened. The male cone ovoid 21 cm's. long 13 cm's. diameter. Megasporophylls (female cone) 28 to 32 cm's. long, colour orange covered with tomentum, narrowly triangular and very finely toothed having the apical spine 32 cm's. long the ovules 4 to 6 orange, mature and very pruinose.

There are two distinct habitats of this newly described species one in Queensland, in the upper waters of the Lawn Hill creek and its tributaries. Near to Lawn Hill station, south-west of Burketown near the Gulf of Carpentaria, these colonies grow in limestone country in exposed situations and along small creek dominated valleys, with tall forestation. Other vegetation is sparse in the areas. Climate is tropical, dry winters and wet summers, average rainfall 700 mm per annum. The other colonies are on Wollogorang Station, Northern Territory near the Carpentaria coast. These colonies growing over sandstone and sandstone derived soils along the gorges. Basically suited mostly to very tropical regions with dry winters. Seed difficult to raise, generally.

PALMS IN MY GARDEN

Possibly the first palm we planted, was a *Phoenix roebelenii* which we placed in the centre of our front garden, around about 1960. Next came two *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*, (piccabeens), which were planted in approximately the same area. I inherited from a friend, 2 *Chrysalidocarpus lutescens*, a dwarf form of *Caryota mitis*, a *Rhapis excelsa*, *chamaedorea sieffrizii* and a *Livistona spinosa*. These then formed the nucleus of my now growing collection.

My collection grew in the very early 70's, prior to the founding of the P.A.C.S.O.A. society and included the following:-

Howea forsteriana, *H. belmoreana*, *Archontophoenix alexandrae*, several *Chamaerops humilis*, *Trachycarpus fortunei*, *Hyophorbe lagenicaulis* and *H. verschaffeltii*, *Chamaedorea elegans*, *C. microspadix*, *C. tenella* and *C. metallica* in both the fishtail and divided leaf forms. The following species form the final planting of palms in my front garden, *Euterpe edulis*, *Opsiandra nana*, *Livistona monostachya*, *Sabal minor*, *Rhapis excelsa* (variegata), *Microcoelum pedicellianum*, *Caryota mitis*, *Livistona decipiens*. With the plantings in my front garden now complete, I started to move down both sides of the house, towards my back garden. *Chrysalidocarpus lucubensis*, *Caryota rumphiana*, *Chamaedorea brachypoda*, *C. zataracturum*, *C. tenella*, 3 *Calamus* sp., *Ptychosperma macarthurii* (narrow), *Wodyetia binurcata*, *Laccospadix australasica*, *Livistona tarcom* sp. and (2) *Ptychosperma elegans*. As the years rolled by, my ever increasing interest in the *cycadales* predominated and palms took a second place. Although several species like *Butia* and such went to my son's growing collection, my back garden still supports: *Roystonea oleracea*, *Vectchia joannis*, *Coccothrinax parviflora*, *Caryota mitis*, *Livistona* sp. Blackdown, *Livistona ramsayi*, *Livistona chinensis* mine being the tallest I have ever seen, *Normanbya nomambyi*, *Caryota cumingii*, *Neodypsis decaryi*, *Rophalostylis sapida*, *Aiphanes caryotifolia*, *Sabal texana*, *Sabal minor* (dwarf).

There are many more species not mentioned which are still in pots, as ground room is now gone. Other than the palms just mentioned my garden contains about 80 full grown trees as well as shrubs, gingers, heliconias, bromeliads, cycads and of course cordylines.

Sometimes I wish there was lots more room, but when I see falling palm leaves and the trauma they cause by wife, I think enough is enough.

Len P. Butt



LEN BUTT AMONG THE BOWENIA

— TOWNSVILLE

VALE

Harold Caulfield, retired curator of the Brisbane City Gardens, and the Mt Cootthra Botanic Gardens departed this life 30th August, 1994.

As patron also of the Southern group of P.A.C.S.O.A. for quite some years his help and advice to the then young society will always be remembered. Harold, as inaugural member of the earlier Australian Palm Society of North Queensland had a good knowledge of the family principles belonging at that time, also to the American Palm Society.

In his extensive capacity around Brisbane he is remembered for his newspaper columns, his judging abilities in the Courier mail garden contests, his botanical management of two great gardens and his patronage of several societies. Our sincere condolences to his wife and family.

PORTRAIT OF A CYCAD - Part Five

Although it is generally accepted that the order *Cycadales*, which encompasses all the known living cycads and their very ancient prehistoric ancestors is valid for its 300 million year age period.

The order did not reach a peak in numbers or fossil evidence till the Mesozoic age. They then survived the periods of the earth's rapid changes through the Peruvian to the Triassic ages. Fossil evidence though abundant in the rocks of many countries during these periods are not as prolific as what occurs in the Jurassic age of the dinosaurs. This lasted 57 million years.

This of course, gives the nurserymen the fuel to call them food for dinosaurs as they were prolific and abundant then and reached their highest productive peak of existence at the dinosaur time. Whether the early *Bennetitales* and *Cycadales* then contained the toxins of today is debatable maybe these were developed in the living cycads as a defence mechanism for survival. This is food for thought!!