

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA PALM SOCIETY

e-NEWSLETTE AUGUST 2021

Clinostigma harlandii growing to perfection in the Huntington Beach garden of Doctor Carl Hartman. This palm species was believed impossible to grow in Southern California until Carl let the genie out of the bottle.

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Palm Society e-Newsletter Overview by Don Tollefson: The August 2021 Palm Society e-Newsletter contains the June 26, 2021 Palm Society meeting recap, 17 full page color photos of palms and companion plants and the regular "Q and A," Questions 131 - 140 of the 200 most commonly asked questions about palm cultivation.

June 26, 2021 Meeting Recap by Don Tollefson: "The Doctor's Palm Garden Tour" This palm garden tour and meeting, which was referred to as "The Doctor's Palm Garden Tour," was an outstanding meeting featuring two great Huntington Beach Gardens hosted by Doctor Carl Hartman and Doctor Alex Kudas. The two doctors are good friends and attribute their friendship to a chance meeting years earlier that occurred due to their shared interest in growing palms.

The first garden tour was that of long time Palm Society member Doctor Carl Hartman: Over the years, Carl has not only been cultivating a private collection of rare palms, but Carl has also contributed various articles to the Southern California Palm Journal. Carl is an expert grower with several rare and hard to grow palms in his palm collection, including, but not limited to an outstanding *Clinostigma harlandii*. I personally have never seen another *harlandii* growing in Southern California. But in the continuing pursuit of my desire to grow any rare, unusual or difficult to grow palm in southern California that anyone else can grow, I have set out to locate, and grow a *harlandii* in my personal palm collection. Carl explained that his soil is heavy clay and as a result, several of his palms have not exhibited the growth that he would like to have seen. Carl suggests that if you have clay soil, you may consider going to the trouble of removing some or most of the clay soil and replacing it with a more palm friendly medium. Sounds like a lot of work.

The second garden was that of another long time Southern California Palm Society member, Doctor Alex Kudas: Alex has been attending Palm Society meetings for years, quietly bidding on palms at Palm Society meeting auctions and buying as many as he can to take home and plant in his garden. Alex's garden proves that a truly great way to develop an outstanding palm collection is by simply attending as many regular Palm Society meetings and garden tours as you can and bidding on and buying as many of the palms you like as you can as they come up for sale at the auctions. I saw several palms at Alex's garden that impressed me, but the palm that most impressed me was a three or four year old *Ravanea jullietae*. I'm not a particular fan of *Ravaneas*, but I was particularly taken aback upon seeing Alex's *Jullietiae*. It was absolutely gorgeous.

We are fortunate to have these two outstanding gardens in Huntington Beach containing so many rare and unusual palm species. This was yet another great opportunity for members to visit palm gardens that were within close proximity to the ocean and witness the Southern California Coastal influence in palm cultivation.

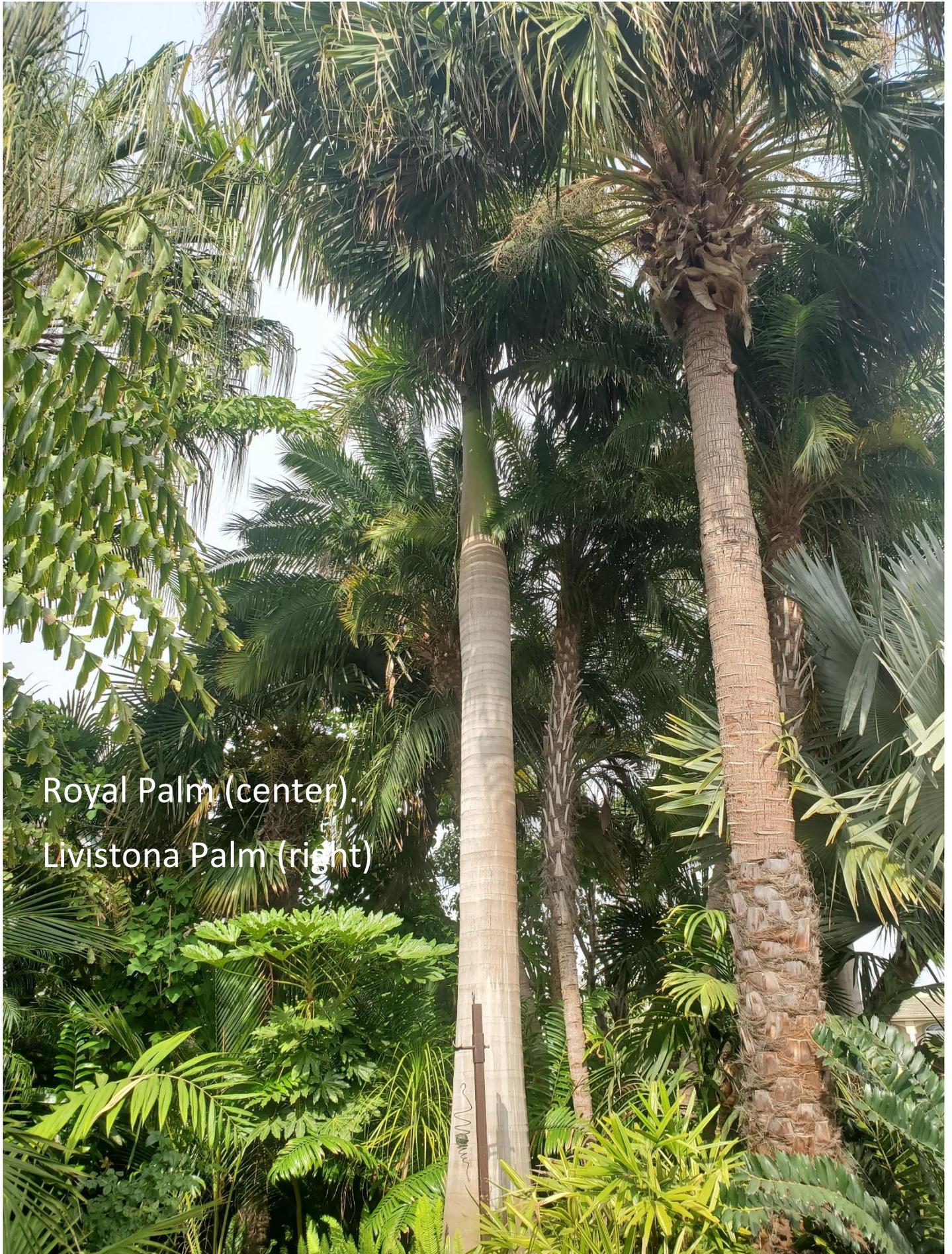


Dr. Carl Hartman in his garden

July 26, 2021



**Carl Hartman's
back yard and
swimming pool.**



Royal Palm (center).
Livistona Palm (right)

Q and A, questions 131 – 140 of the 200 most frequently asked palm cultivation questions by Dave Bleistein and Don Tollefson: Palm experts, Dave Bleistein and Don Tollefson answer questions about Palm Cultivation. Dave and Don arrive at their answers independently. Sometimes they agree. Sometimes they don't. Read their answers and decide which expert you agree with.

131. Sometimes a new frond will emerge that is short and stumpy compared to the other, normal palm fronds. What causes this?

Dave Bleistein: Stumpy fronds can be the result of many issues. Sometimes it's caused by the palm suffering a blow to its growth bud, though this usually also causes "accordion" shape where the leaf won't open properly.

Don Tollefson: About 95 percent of the time this is the palm's reaction to cold during the winter. The frond will be emerging during the spring or summer, but the damage was done while the frond was developing beneath the exit sheath during the winter. The emerging new frond tends to be the most susceptible to this condition and often a second and sometimes even a third palm will exhibit the same habit. Generally, this is not something of concern because as the palm grows and becomes stronger and more acclimated to the winter temperatures, it tends not to be impacted in this manner.

132. What is that string of plant tissue at the ends of a palm frond that tends to hold the leaves together as the new frond emerges?

Dave Bleistein: I know there's a technical name for it, but I don't know what it's called.

Don Tollefson: I don't know. I should, but I don't.

133. Can I remove this connective tissue that connects the ends of the leaflets or should I leave it alone?

Dave Bleistein: I generally leave them alone.

Don Tollefson: You absolutely can remove this plant tissue. Once the frond opens, this plant tissue serves no purpose whatsoever for the palm. On the other hand, it doesn't impose any danger so if you like the way it looks, you can certainly let it dangle.

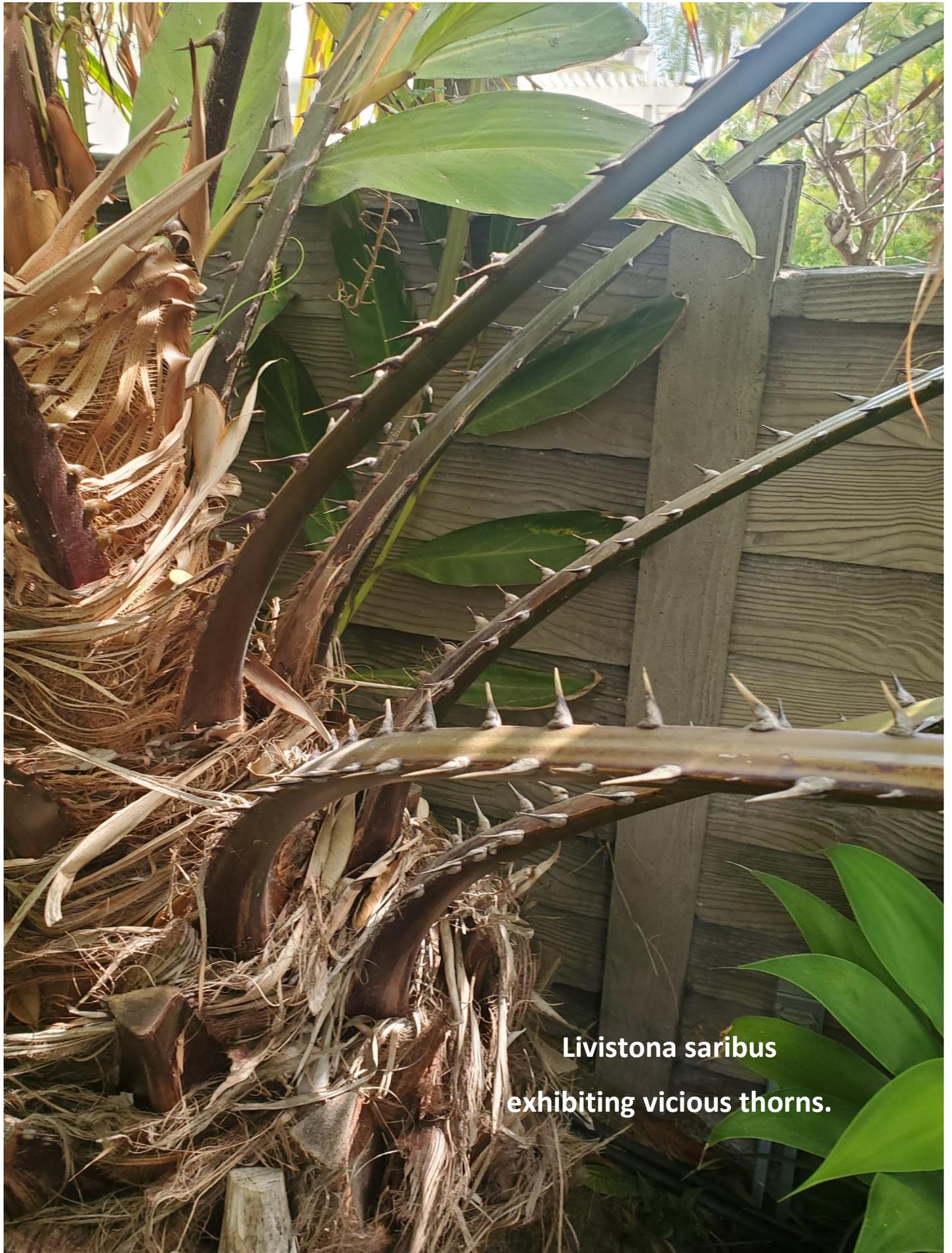
134. Sometimes a frond will emerge that opens only partially or refuses to open. Is there something I can do?

Dave Bleistein: Usually, I've found the best thing to do is nothing. If the next frond opens normally, great. However, sometimes a palm in distress won't open its fronds, or, conversely, I've seen palms moving very briskly that can pop out more than one spear at once.

Don Tollefson: This is a frond that's in distress. It may also be a palm that's in distress. I consider a frond that opens partially or refuses to open a frond that's in need of my assistance. I tend to carefully open the fronds. I try to space out this process so as to give the palm as much chance of helping itself as possible. This often results in a substantial amount of damage to the frond. But, I look at it this way. It's either a substantial amount of damage to the frond if I try to help it out or total destruction if I don't.



Latania Species
Hartman Garden



Livistona saribus
exhibiting vicious thorns.



Livistona saribus



Can you identify this palm species?

135. I don't have a greenhouse. Can I grow palms inside my house?

Dave Bleistien: The short answer is yes, but the details will vary depending on both the palms and the house. Generally, most houses with central heat are too dry for many tropical palms, but there are exceptions. A book or two could be written in answer to this question, but, in general, if you're growing palms indoors, pick types that are small and resistant to dry soil and air. Chamadoreas are ideal in that regard, but they're not the only ones.

Don Tollefson: Don't even bother to try. Palms (and most plants) begin to die once they are positioned indoors. Ask any indoor plant decorator. They display plants indoors periodically changing the plants with replacement plants and moving the original plants outdoors to rejuvenate. Plants tend to die indoors because they don't receive fresh air, air exchanges and air movement. Three things that are devastating for plants. There are some plants that will grow indoors. But, not enough and not the varieties that most members want to grow in their palm collections. Besides, with global warming, which most of us in the palm society truly believe is an actual phenomenon, you no longer need a greenhouse to grow palms outdoors in Southern California.

136. I can't seem to grow palms on my oceanfront property. Is there a way to grow them successfully?

Dave Bleistien: Depending on exactly where you are, there are palms that will take the salt of the seashore. If your place is warm enough (Florida, Hawaii) Coconuts are an obvious answer, but not the only ones. *Allagoptera arenarum* will also live right by the sea. Other species will do so as well, but careful research is required.

Don Tollefson: If you can't get palms to grow in your garden near the beach, do what we used to do before global warming made it so easy to grow palms. That is grow the palms larger in a protected area and then plant them in your garden along the coast. Many palm species will simply not grow in a cool area until they are larger. Right along the coast is *prima facia* "cool." So, obtain palms that are large 5 gallon or larger and you should do well. You still might have problems with palms that don't react well to salt in the moisture that's carried in the air. So, it's best to ascertain what varieties of palms do well along the ocean.

137. I can't get a certain palm species to grow in my greenhouse. Is there still a chance it will grow outdoors?

Dave Bleistien: This depends on the palm and the greenhouse. Some palms really appreciate drier conditions than a greenhouse often has, though that can be adjusted.

Don Tollefson: Absolutely there's a chance. It required a lot of time before I realized we no longer need greenhouses to grow palms in southern California. Consequently, I tried all sorts of techniques to grow my palms to a plantable size in a minimum period of time. I bought several *Basselinia Pancheris* and *Pinanga philippinensis* and grew them in various protected areas. I planted only one of each of these species in the ground in my garden. During a fairly mild winter, all of both species perished except the two of each species that I planted in the ground. They both came through the winter and look pretty good. There's a moral to this story here and it's "try it and see."

138. A large palm frond broke the second from the top palm frond on a small palm. The frond looks great, except for that second palm from the top. I know the top three fronds on a palm are important. Should I cut it or ignore it?

A photograph of a tall palm tree in a garden. The tree is the central focus, with its trunk and fronds extending upwards. The fronds are green and feathery. The background shows a blue sky with some clouds. To the left, there is a building with a dark roof and a white wall. In the foreground, the top of a person's head is visible, looking down. The text "Livistona decipiens" and "Hartman Garden" is overlaid on the bottom right of the image.

Livistona decipiens
Hartman Garden



Livistona decipiens: The “Ribbon Palm” is the common name of this legendary Australian palm. Notice the numerous ribbon-like leaflets dangling from the fronds.

Doctor Alex Kudas stands in front of a *Ravenia jullietiae* in his Huntington Beach garden





Bismarckia nobilis
Kudas Garden



Spindle Palm
(*Hyophorbe verschaffeltii*)



Burretio kentia species: Kudas Garden



“Burgandy Rhophy”

Rhopalostylis cheesmanii

Notice the burgundy crownshaft. This is unusual for a “Rhophy” as all other Rhophy species exhibit green crownshafts.



The legendary stripes of the
"Tiger Palm,"
Burretio kentia Vieillardii
Kudas Garden



Cyphophoenix
Elegans
Kudas Garden

Dave Bleistein: Depending on the type I'd generally leave it. Every little bit helps, especially for tender palms. On the other hand, if it's a tough type, I'd remove it.

Don Tollefson: It depends on the amount of damage done to the broken frond. If it's one of the top three fronds, it's extremely valuable to the palm. It's sort of amazing to determine the value of a broken palm. Sometimes a frond will simply hang and look great, providing nutrition to the palms as though it weren't broken. If it begins to turn brown, exhibiting signs that the frond is dying or dead, then remove it. If it is a rare palm that doesn't have many fronds, I generally try to place a "splint" on the frond. I have a simple and quick system in which I cut a piece of bamboo. I lie the bamboo parallel to the broken frond. I wrap electrical tape in two positions above and below the break. The palm stays level and you hardly notice the splint. I leave the splint on for the life of the frond cutting off the frond when it gets old and dies, splint and all. I don't know if this is helpful. It's too difficult to run any sort of text. But, I know if I broke my arm, I'd sure like someone like me to put my arm in a splint rather than someone who would ignore my broken arm.

139. I planted a lot of palms last year and about half of them died. What percentage of palms would you expect not to survive through that first winter outdoors?

Dave Bleistein: If the climate is right, I'd expect close to 100% survival, though some kinds are very touchy about disturbance when it's cold, especially Roystonea babies.

Don Tollefson: My garden is pretty complete so I don't plant out many palms anymore. But, I seldom lose any. Or, the palms I lose, I'm expecting to lose, because they are species not known to grow in Southern California. Simply put, you're doing something wrong. Talk to an experienced grower and you'll quickly find out what it is.

140. I tend not to lose many palms the first year I plant them. But I do tend to lose palms from time to time for no apparent reason. Is this normal?

Dave Bleistein: This depends on the palms and the place. If you're in a tough climate, a loss or two isn't so bad. If it's a climate like Hawaii, it could be a concern, though, again, a great deal depends on the palms, too.

Don Tollefson: It's easy to lose a palm that's been in the ground growing well for several years. Generally, it's your favorite palm, the one you're growing that no one else seems to be able to grow. The cause is almost always root fungus. That's where lower fronds inexplicably begin to die working their way up the palm until there is no life showing, but the emerging frond. Then, one day the palm falls over, emerging frond and all and you're a monkey's uncle! It happens so you have to learn to take the good with the bad.

The Palm Society e-Newsletter is published for the exclusive use of the Palm Society of Southern California by Don Tollefson and various volunteers who contribute from issue to issue. Any questions, suggestions, or comments should be delivered to Don Tollefson email DonTol@verizon.net