

Southern California Palm Society

e-Newsletter May 2022

The species of this magnificent beauty of a palm is uncertain. It was planted as *Dypsis decipiens*, but it is clearly a hybrid. There is some speculation it is crossed with *Dypsis ambositrae*. Whatever its species ethnicity, it is a drop dead show stopper. Watkin Garden-San Diego

Disclaimer: Views and opinions are of the individual authors and may or may not reflect the opinions of the Southern California Palm Society and/or its board.

Overview by Don Tollefson: **The May 2022 Palm Society e-Newsletter** contains the April, 2022 Palm Society Meeting Recap of the featured San Diego “bookend” palm collections of Terry Watkin and Bret Qua, 22 full page color images of palms, the palm auction results and the regular “Q and A” (Questions and Answers) 171-180 of the 200 most frequently asked questions about palm cultivation

January 2021 Meeting Recap by Don Tollefson: The March, 2022 Palm Society Bookend Tour” of the palm collections of Terry Watkin and Bret Qua was a great opportunity to experience the enhanced benefits of viewing outstanding palm collections that are located side by side. Bookend palms collections are becoming more frequent among palm society members. It’s always a curiosity as to how bookend collections first get started and then how they progress.

Palm auction results by Dave Bleistein: The Auction took in a total of \$2,278.21 and the largest donors (sales figures) were: Josh Allen (\$1,085); Dave Bleistein (\$400); Phil Bergman (\$175); Burt Repin; Larry Black (\$120); Mike Marika (\$100) and Wayne Julian (\$80) with \$188 from 100% donors.



"Becariophoenix alfredii"

The garden tours
displayed all three of the
Beccariophoenix species

Watkin Garden.



Beccariophoenix fenestralis

Undoubtedly the most difficult of the beccariophoenix to grow in Southern California, this particular fenestralis grows beautifully in San Diego.

Qua Garden

“Q and A” (Question and Answer) Questions 171 180 of the 200 most frequently asked questions about palm cultivation by Dave Bleistein and DonTollefson: 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.

171. How common is it to have neighbors having “book end” collections of rare palms like we saw at this last Palm Society meeting?

Dave Bleistein: Not anywhere near common enough, that's for sure. But I admit I'm kinda biased in that regard. Have to do a survey and see.

171. How common is it to have neighbors having “book end” collections of rare palms like we saw at the last Palm Society meeting?

Don Tollefson: It's what I refer to as an “infrequent consistency.” Ironically, at the next meeting we will again be touring the “book end” palm collections of John Boyer and Guy Young. I first saw this bookend phenomenon about 30 years ago when I visited the Huntington Beach bookend palm collections of Lois Rossten and Frank Ketchem. Since then, I've visited at least half a dozen more bookend collections and over twenty collections in close proximity to one another. There are lots of people who like or love palms that just happen to become inspired by their nextdoor neighbor. A potential future palm lover sees his neighbor's palm collection and the rest is history. It's contagious.

172. I'm a palm society member with a large palm collection. My neighbor has expressed an interest in growing palms. What are some tips I should provide him along with what I have already learned?

Dave Bleistein: A lot depends on where you and your neighbors are located.

But generally, I tell them to be careful what you fall in love with, and don't fill up your garden with the first things you find in the store for sale for cheap. Maybe give them a freebie or two of the right kind of palms to grow.

And join the PSSC!

172. I'm a palm society member with a large palm collection. My neighbor has expressed an interest in growing palms. What are some tips I should provide him along with what I have already learned?

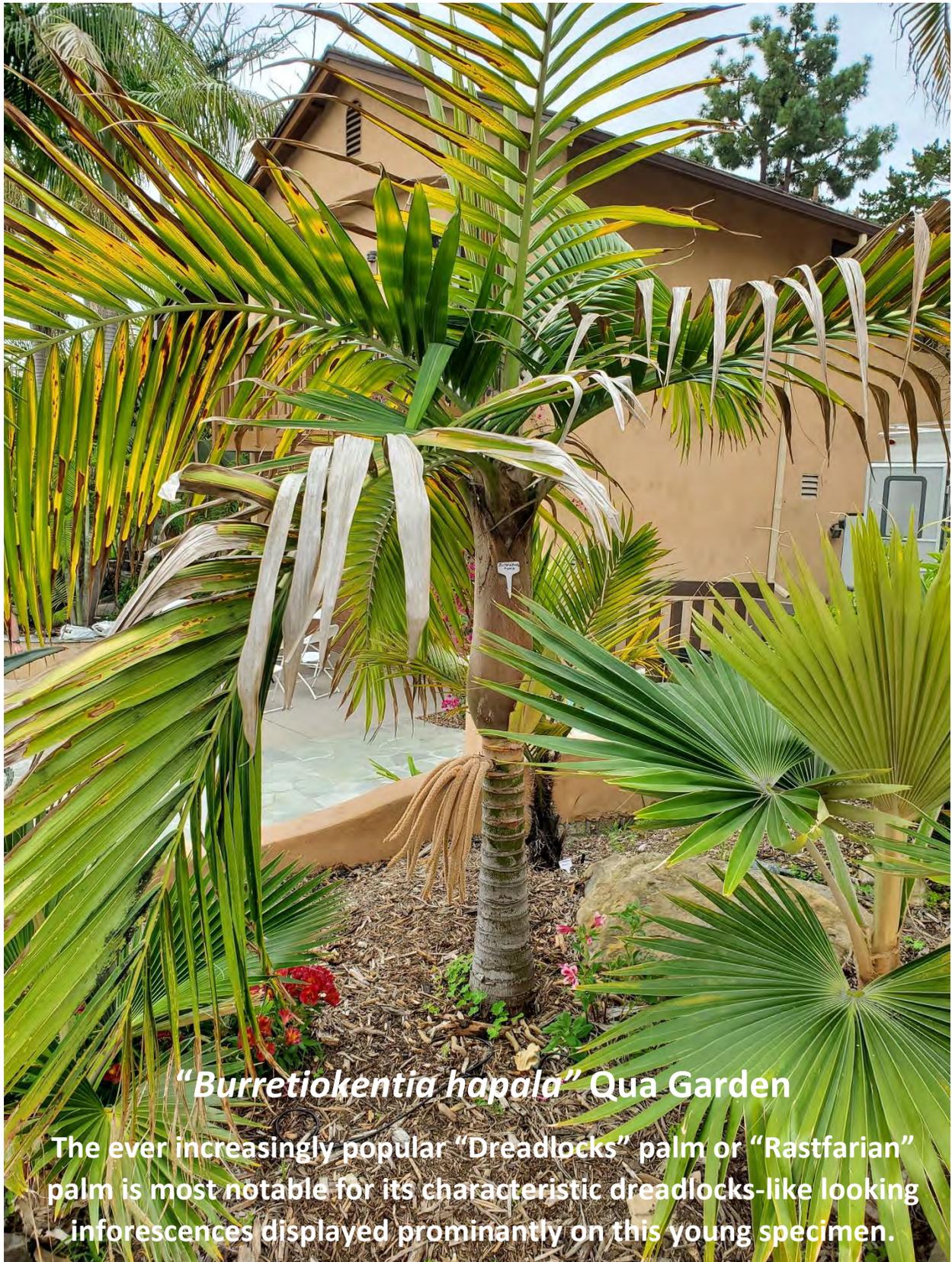
Don Tollefson: I recommend this tried and proven recipe for a successful palm collection: "Start young, be persistent, have patience and attend all of the regular Palm Society meetings."

173. Do you think experienced palm society members who have palm collections could weigh in accurately and convincingly on the subject of global warming or the lack thereof?

Dave Bleistein: Not Sure. On the one hand, I think being a good gardener is a long-term skill based on observations, often gleaned over years or decades. This includes watching the seasons and the weather.

On the other hand, long-term suppositions and beliefs formed by observations can also be wrong.

The Earth is a big series of systems and sub-systems, working in sometimes counterintuitive ways. I don't see any fast easy way to deal with this, and mistrust purported "answers" alleging the same.



***"Burretio kentia hapala"* Qua Garden**

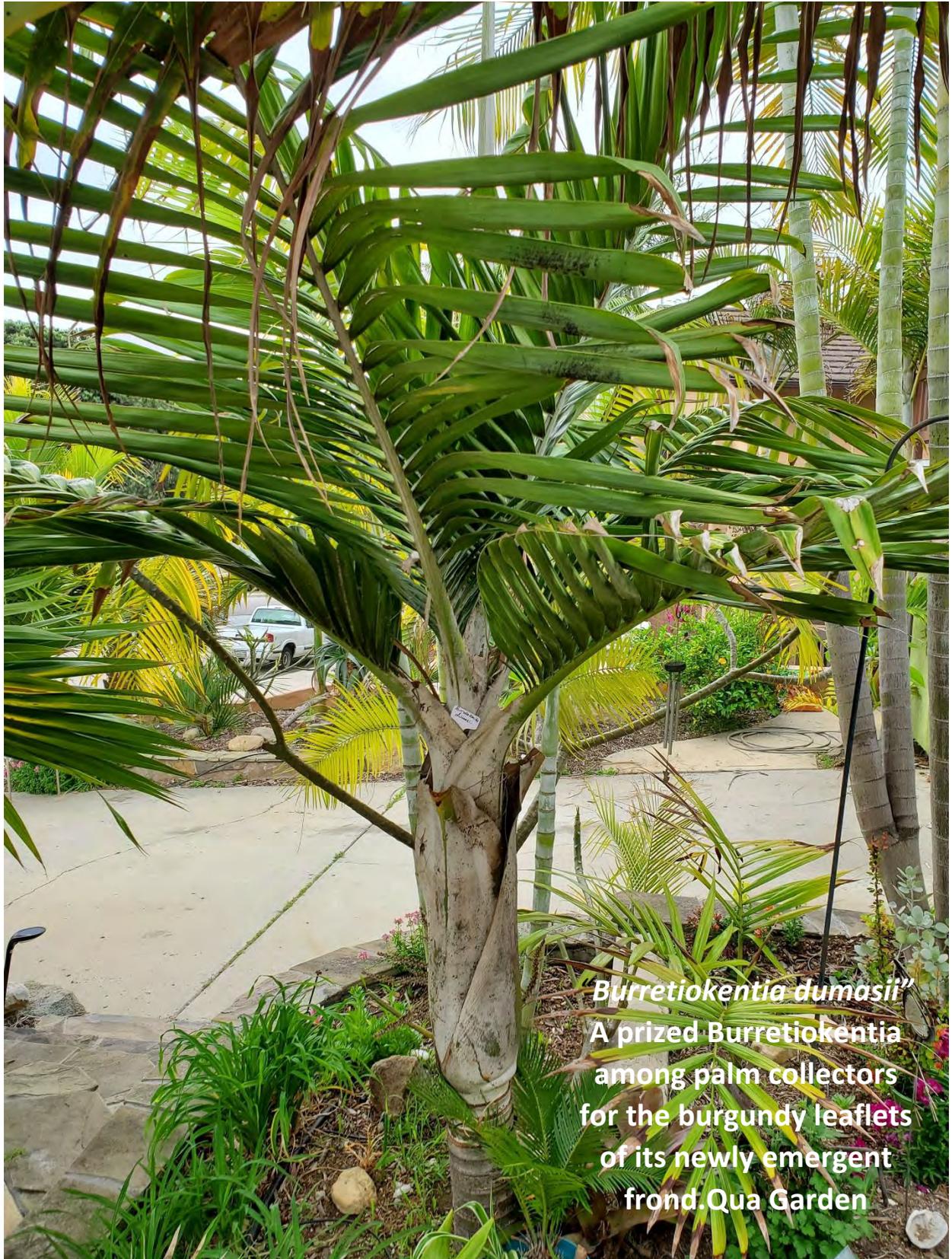
The ever increasingly popular "Dreadlocks" palm or "Rastfarian" palm is most notable for its characteristic dreadlocks-like looking inflorescences displayed prominently on this young specimen.



Pseudophoenix sargentii

Young specimen

Qua Garden



Burretiokentia dumasii
A prized Burretiokentia
among palm collectors
for the burgundy leaflets
of its newly emergent
frond. Qua Garden



**Conspicuous
big white
basket**

“Chambeyronia Houailou”

Watkin Garden

173. Do you think experienced palm society members who have palm collections could weigh in accurately and convincingly on the subject of global warming or the lack thereof?

Don Tollefson: Are you kidding? We could weigh in more accurately and with far greater efficacy than any weatherman or climate forecaster. I am to global warming as Doctor Fauci is to contagious diseases. I can name palms that now grow in Southern California that couldn't previously grow here because it was too cold. I can name palms that now grow quickly in Southern California that used to just snail along. I can name palms that no longer need to be grown in a greenhouse prior to being positioned outdoors. I can now plant palms from one-gallon pots that used to require being three to five-gallon pots before being planted. I used to have to let palms sit in their container outdoors for the first year. to acclimate. Now, I get small palms home from the Palm Society auction, and into the ground before I go inside my house. Bring on the experts and Doctor Fauci equivalents of the anti-global warming naysayers and you'll witness my quick and convincing victory.

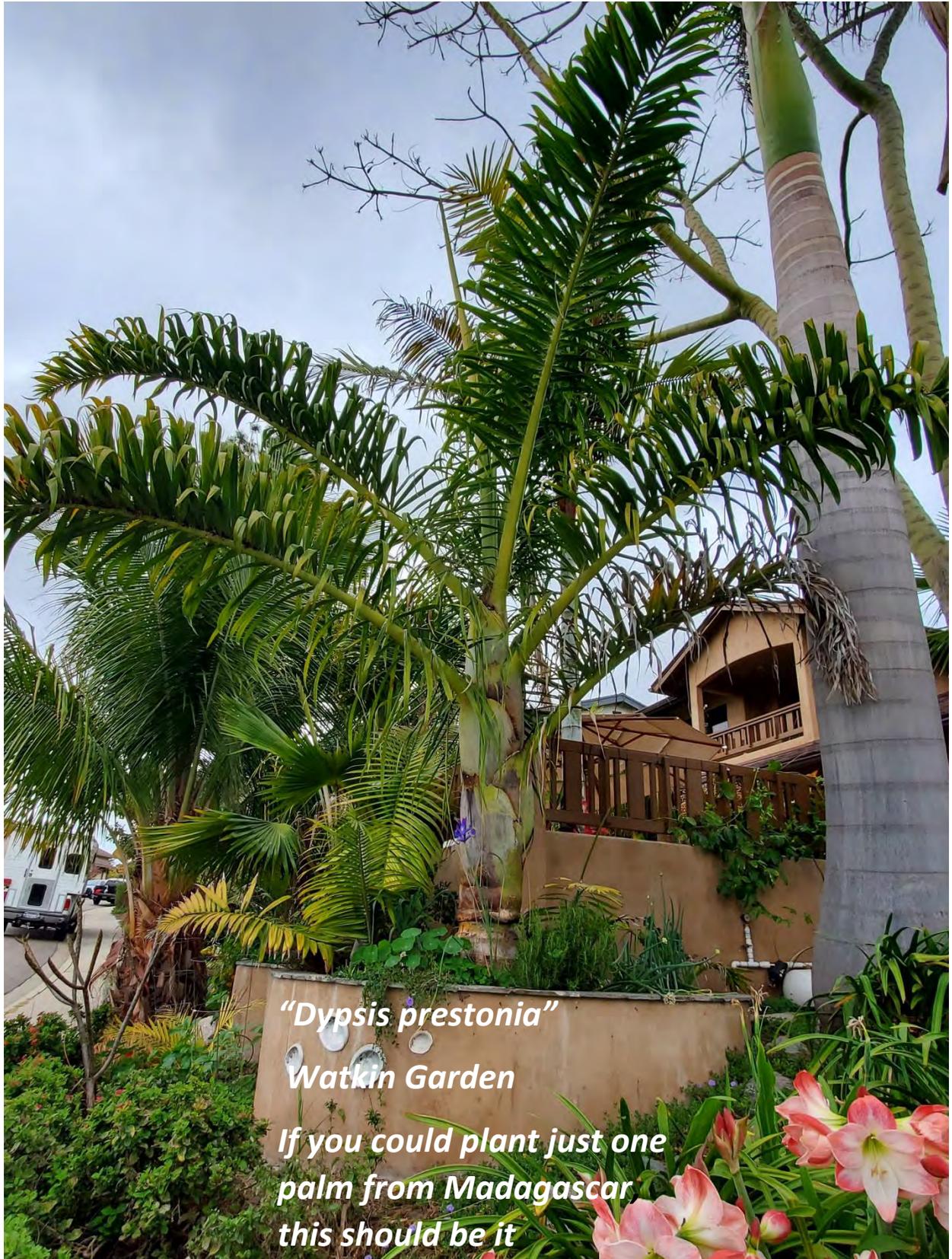
174. Do you need a greenhouse to start palms and grow them while they are young?

Dave Bleistein: A lot depends on the palms and where the grower is located. Greenhouses maintain higher temperatures and humidity than their surroundings by trapping both moisture and heat inside them. Palms, as a group, appreciate higher temperatures and humidity, but be mindful of exceptions, some of which are exceptionally beautiful. So, generally, the closer to the ocean, the less "essential" a greenhouse is, though I think they'll still be useful by the beach, particularly if you want to grow really rare palms from the tropics or near tropics. Higher temperatures are particularly helpful with *Dypsis* and other similar types. If your insanity has reached high levels, a greenhouse is recommended.



"Chambeyronia macrocarpa"

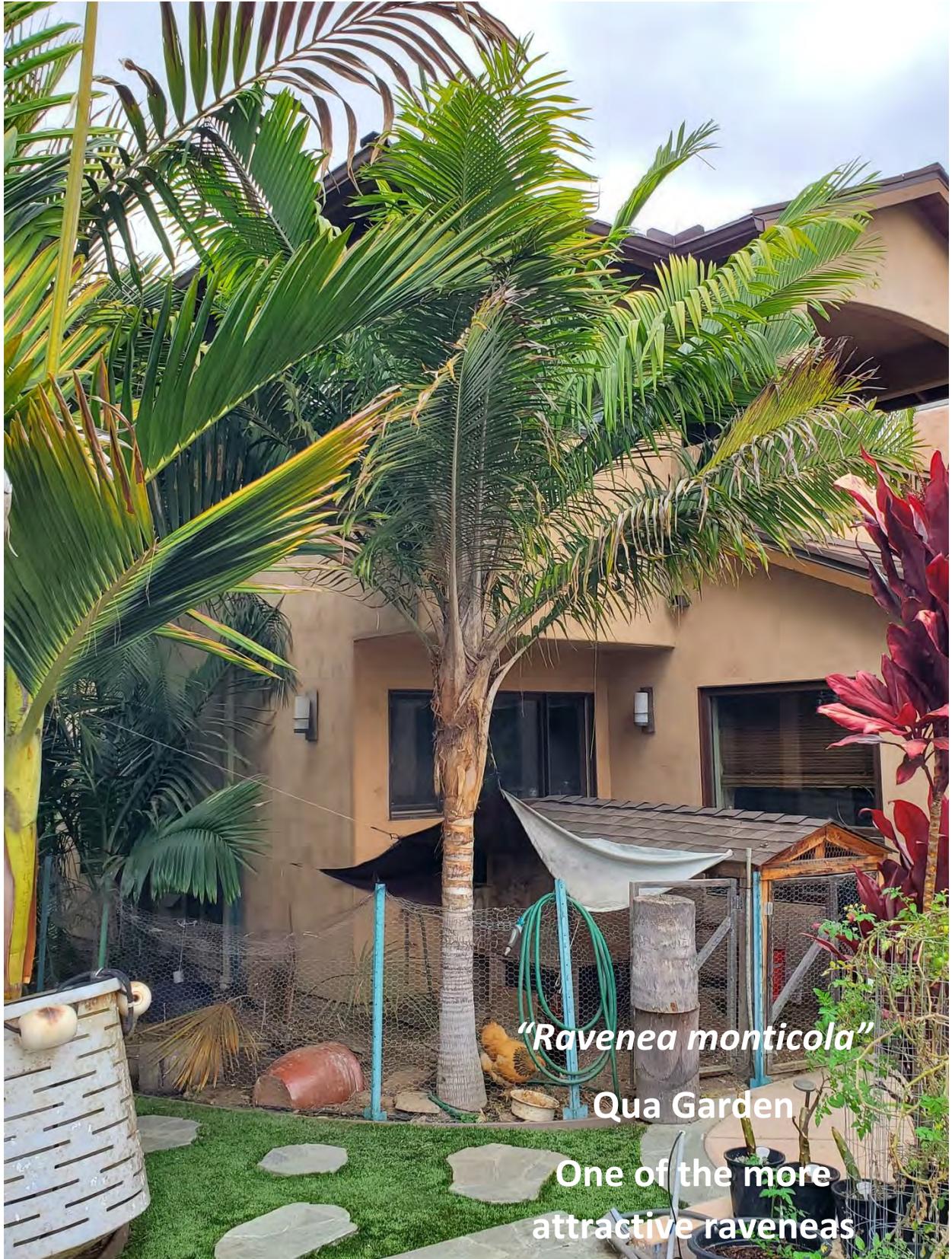
This is an exceptionally popular palm among rare palm collectors Watkin Garden



"Dypsis prestonia"

Watkin Garden

*If you could plant just one
palm from Madagascar
this should be it*



"Ravenea monticola"

Qua Garden

One of the more attractive raveneas

One great thing about a greenhouse is that you'll be able to use it as a nurse place for plants having a bit of trouble or recent ones you've dug from the ground that will appreciate a bit of extra heat.

174. Do you need a greenhouse to start palms and grow them while they are young?

Don Tollefson: Absolutely not (see my previous answer) But it certainly helps. Most collectors leave that aspect of palm gardening to professional growers who grow palms to sell to other growers and collectors. There are several of these growers in Southern California, Florida and Hawaii. But aside from those growers, if you have a small palm that can survive in Southern California, you typically can grow it outdoors from an early age. It will just grow more slowly while it is young. Note, palms typically don't setback after coming out of a greenhouse and being positioned outdoors in Southern California if they are brought out as a 1-gallon size or larger.

175. I have some *Dypsis* species growing in my palm collection and they are slow as molasses. Will they ever speed up?

Dave Bleistein: As a group, I've found *Dypsis* to be easy to sprout (usually) but quite slow to grow when small. But much faster when the heat and humidity are increased, up to about 90 F. That said, some species are faster than others.

Many do speed up, sometimes a lot, with age and size. One particular example is *Dypsis leptocheilos*, the Teddy Bear Palm. When they're small, they're slow, but steady. When their caliper reaches about 8 inches across and they're ready to trunk, they almost explode into vertical growth. My two big ones are a great example. For years they sat there, getting bigger and bigger but not too fast. Suddenly, when they trunked they put on a couple feet in height a year. Now they soar almost thirty feet tall, after having been planted in 2005 from sad-sack five gallons.



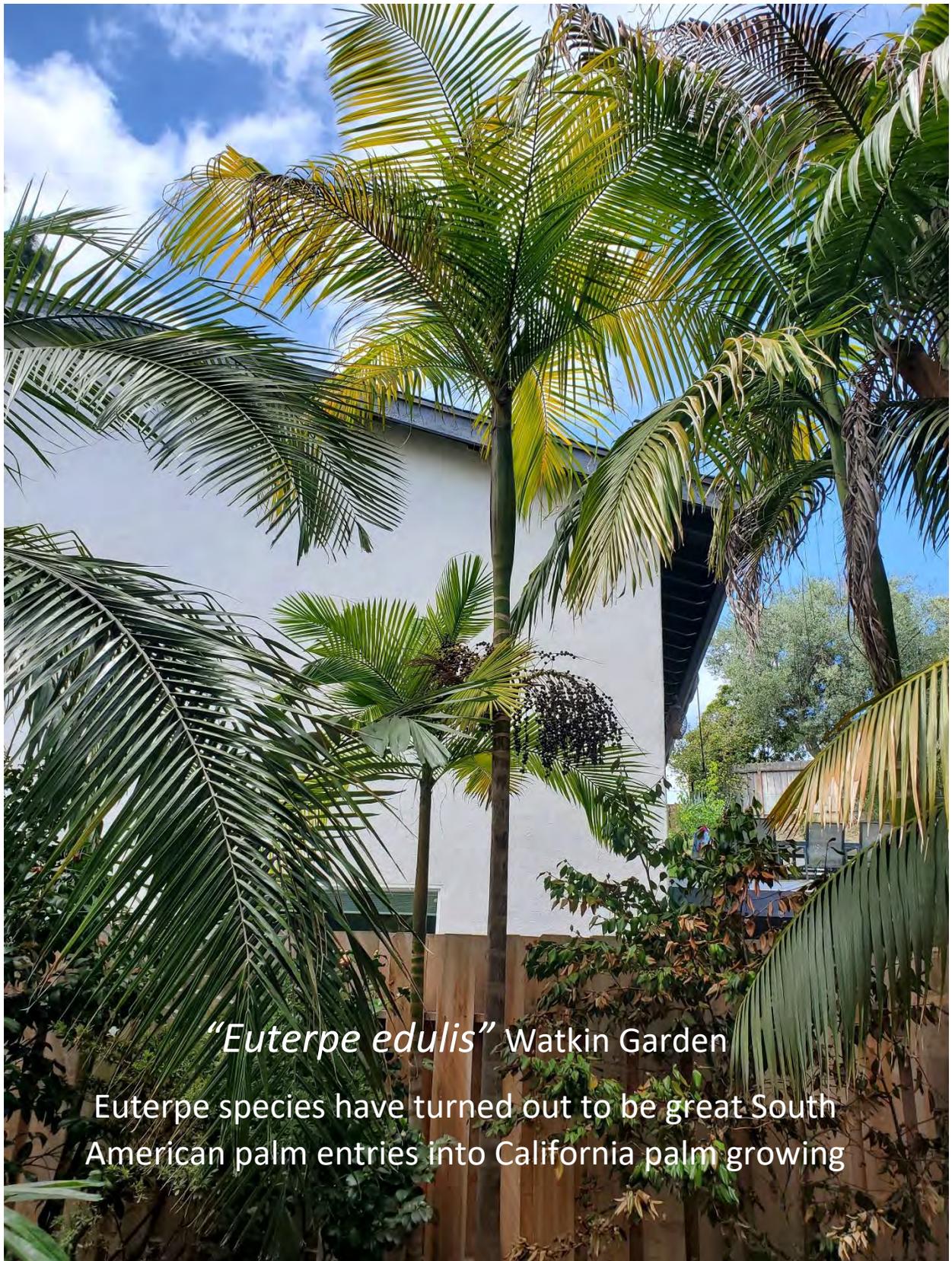
“Dypsis pambana”

Qua Garden



“Dypsis arenarum”

Qua Garden



“Euterpe edulis” Watkin Garden

Euterpe species have turned out to be great South American palm entries into California palm growing

175. I have some *Dypsis* species growing in my palm collection and they are slow as molasses. Will they ever speed up?

Don Tollefson: *Dypsis* species, particularly the large *Dypsis* species, like to snail along until they begin to form trunk. Time-wise, I mean up to ten years or so along the coast. Once they begin to form trunk, voila! They begin to grow well. I wouldn't go so far as to say they grow fast, but definitely well. I frequently see large *Dypsis* species at the palm garden tours, so alas, be patient. Time moves and so do large *Dypsis* species

176. I'm worried about the impending water shortage. Is there any way to save rainwater for irrigation?

Dave Bleistein: You are wise and reasonable! There is serious cause for concern! No doubt about it. There are a number of theories floating around for what's happened and what will happen, and the only thing I feel safe to say is we're likely on the edge of something.

I suppose you could build a cistern like they do in Hawaii, but I think the bigger problem is that most of the places in Southern California with nice climates for exotic palms don't get enough rain to really save. In other words, Southern California's entire hydrological system is built around managing scarce rainfall, and when the rain doesn't fall, there's little or nothing to manage. Many places (including La Habra) draw their water from underground aquifers, but those are replenished, in general, by rainfall.

So the short answer, in my opinion, is no.



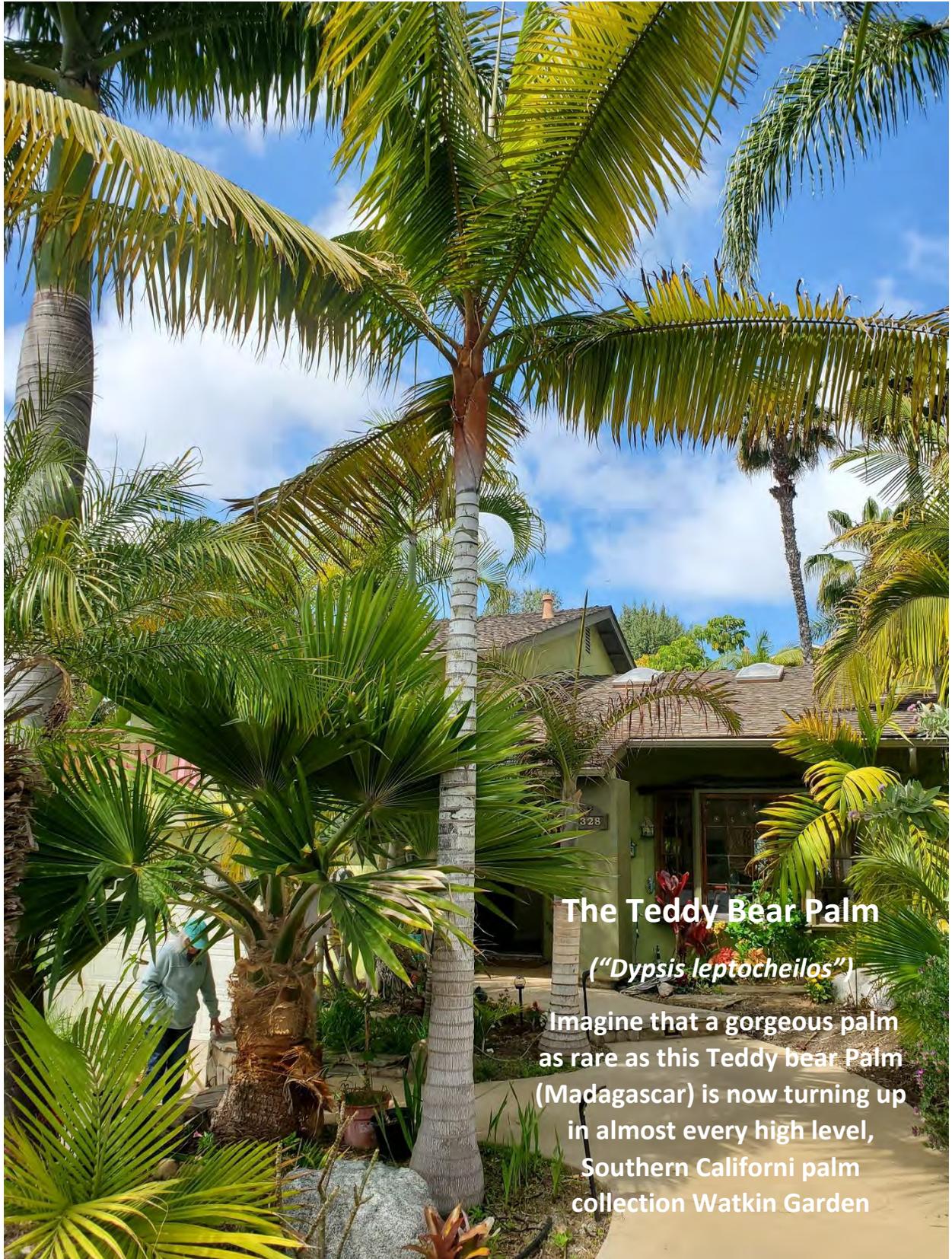
“Rhopalostylis baueri”
“Rhopies” are bullet proof
for Southern California

Not to mention they are
“extremely gorgeous
palms. Watkin Garden



"Hedesepe canterburiana"

Watkin Garden



The Teddy Bear Palm

("Dypsis leptocheilos")

Imagine that a gorgeous palm as rare as this Teddy bear Palm (Madagascar) is now turning up in almost every high level, Southern Californi palm collection Watkin Garden

176. I'm worried about the impending water shortage. Is there any way to save rainwater for irrigation?

Don Tollefson: I'm horrified about the impending water shortage and what little is being done about it. Municipalities are working on onsite water collection and water storage with limited success. Current LA City building code requires rain collector barrels to be positioned at the base of water run off gutters for all new remodels and new construction. The gesture is well intended, but minimal. The barrels fill up quickly when it rains and typically, more excess water overflows onto the ground after the barrels fill than gets collected. The barrels tend to hold about 50 gallons of water, so you only have a couple of weeks of rainwater usage and then you're back using city water. Since water is non compressible, rainwater storage quickly becomes the elephant in the room. There simply is no room for adequate water storage at most locations. The goal of the municipalities should be to maximize the collection and storage of what rainfall is collectible. A combination of more and larger water collectors is necessary in order to store as much rainwater as possible is what's actually called for. We're a long way from maximal collection of our minimal rainfall. Even if we were to reach maximal collection and storage, we still would lack enough rain water for our gardens. Particularly during summer when we need water the most and receive the least. "Houston, we have a problem!".

177. I've heard several opinions of when you should fertilize and how often. Has court ever been held and decided?

Dave Bleistein: "Court"? As in, "of law" or "gone a courtin'"? I generally don't fertilize palms in the ground very much. Good fertile soil will do wonders, if you take the time to add and keep adding organics. I harp endlessly about "growing your soil and you'll grow your plants." But there are times when you have to use chemicals,

especially in fast-draining soils like sand or (so I've heard) "D & G".
If you don't, the palms give up when the nutrients wash away.



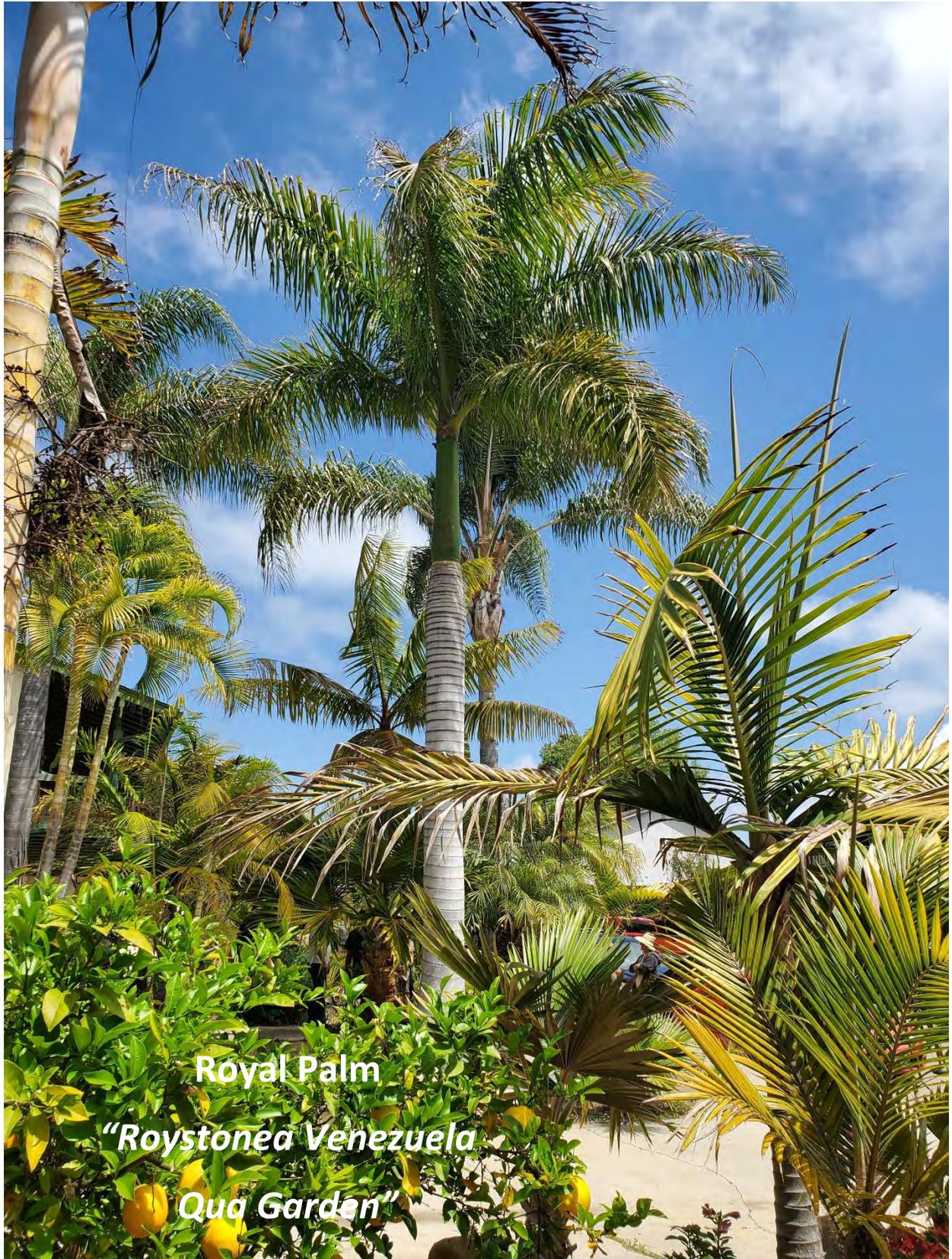
Spindle Palm

“Hyophorbe verschafeltii”

Qua Garden



A young
Mealy bug palm
Watkin Garden



Royal Palm

“Roystonea Venezuela

Qua Garden”

I generally fertilize container palms a lot more than ones in the ground, since potting soil is much faster draining than most soils in the ground.

When I do fertilize, I do it starting about May, and ending about October. No point in feeding in the winter, because (a) the palms usually aren't growing fast because it's too cold; and (b) if not, there's a risk they'll set back badly after a warm spell when it suddenly gets cold (or even freezes). I use both slow release fertilizers like Palms Plus and fast ferts like Miracle grow.

177. I've heard several opinions of when you should fertilize and how often. Has court ever been held and decided?

Don Tollefson: I'm with you on this and no the issue has never been decided. I've seen gardens that look great and gardens that don't look so great and never found a correlation to any fertilizing scheme. I will say that you probably should fertilize once a year. Aside from that I wouldn't go so far as to say how, how often, when or what type of fertilizer you should use.

178. I'd like to get some palm species that I have yet to see growing in any palm collections that I've seen so far in Southern California. Is this possible?

Dave Bleistein: Of course! Visit and support your local palm growers, or those in Hawaii or Florida. Or start your own from seed. By all means be mindfully adventurous. There's a lot we don't know, even if we think we do. After about 40 years of this madness, I've learned that much.

But the key word is mindful and its derivatives; take the time to be aware of why a particular palm isn't seen much. There's often a reason, and it's not always because they won't grow here.

Sometimes they grow too well, too big and too much, like a *Roystonea regia* in a condominium atrium.

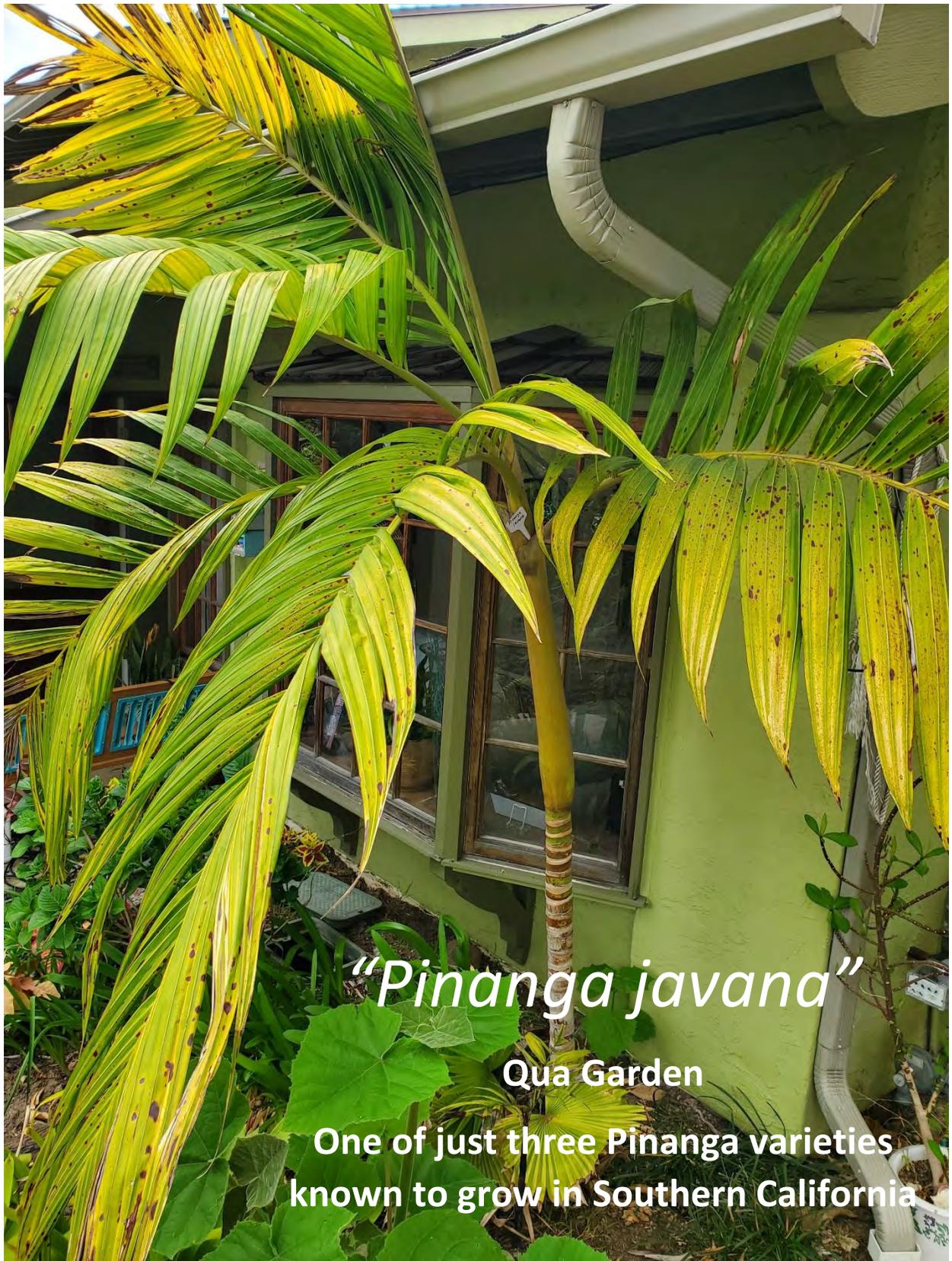
178. I'd like to get some palm species that I have yet to see growing in any palm collections that I've seen so far.in Southern California. Is this possible?

Don Tollefson: There's that old expression, "anything's possible." But it's going to be difficult to come up with anything new. And if you do, a bunch of copy cats will soon be growing the same palm as well. I haven't seen anything new in terms of palm species for at least five to ten years. Personally, I think the best possibility for new palm species are species that couldn't grow here in the past, but now may be capable of growing in Southern California due to global warming. There's an endless supply of these species so give some of them a try.

179. How do palm gardens tend to fare when their owners vacate the gardens due to death or relocation?

Dave Bleistein: A lot depends on the exact circumstances. I've been advised by real estate professionals that generally, palm gardens aren't really popular with home buyers, so if a grand palm garden isn't inherited by a loving heir or heirs, alas, the delicate palms tend to die off or be torn out by the new owners. Examples include the Louis and Carol Hooper garden down the hill from me.

But, blessed are ye who inherit a grand palm garden from your father, mother, or someone else. Think the Velez garden in Westminster and the Hamann garden in El Cajon for two glorious examples. Share the joy and share it with us, if you can, and thank you for having us!



"Pinanga javana"

Qua Garden

One of just three Pinanga varieties
known to grow in Southern California



Orange crownshaft Euterpe

Growing tip: Don't remove the old leaf sheaths of this species to expose its beautiful underlying orange trunk because doing so results in infection causing the palm to die (I've lost two). Watkins Garden



“Syagrus amara”

Perhaps the most sought after species of the syagrus palm family. Qua Garden

179. How do palm gardens tend to fare when their owners vacate the gardens due to death or relocation?

Don Tollefson: Once the owner of a beloved palm collection moves or dies, their gardens tend to deteriorate. I've seen at least twenty gardens go to shambles like this. Two notable exceptions are the gardens of Pauleen Sullivan that are maintained by her sons Gary and Terry Sullivan and the garden of Ralph Velez whose garden is maintained by his son Steve Velez. It truly bothers me the way many beautiful gardens fall into decline. I personally intend to attempt to preserve my garden and palm collection after I die and after my property is sold. Easier said than done. But I don't care, I'll figure it out.

180. Why does the palm society consist mainly of older gardeners?

Dave Bleistein: I think a lot depends on how much access a gardener has to long-term control of sufficient real estate to be able to plant and care for palms over the long term, plus money for water and at least some time to care for them. That generally happens with time, since you get more money, advance in your career, etc. Also, I think as you become older you're more willing to do things like garden after youthful hearty partying loses its luster a bit. Also, as you get older, you get to see the results of your earlier efforts literally and figuratively beginning to bear fruit.

180. Why does the palm society consist mainly of older gardeners?

Don Tollefson: Palm gardening, like any sort of gardening typically requires ownership of the property upon which you will plant and maintain your garden. Purchasing property in Southern California in this day and age requires a fortune. After all, Southern California is God's country. So, to accumulate just the money alone for the down payment of a Southern California property requires several years of earning and

saving. Years a young person has not yet had. So, by the time a young person has the money to purchase a property for a palm collection, that young person is no longer young. To those people who become interested in palms in their 50s and 60s I say, “better late than never.” Because it’s never too late to start a palm collection.

Palm Society e-Newsletter, May, 2022

Questions, Comments, Suggestions and Articles,
Contact Don Tollefson at dontol@verizon.net