

26. How much time each day do you devote to making plant signs? We probably spend less than 10 hours a week making signs, packing them up and shipping them off.

27. Will you ever cross the one million dollars in sales mark in the plant sign business? After 26 years in business, we will pass \$1,000,000 in sales early next year.

28. What's the profit margin like in making signs? We average a little over 20% profit, averaged over the years.

29. Do you do any other type of work? I retired after 32 years of elementary school teaching 13 years ago. I have a big garden (4 acres) here in Utah, and spend a lot of time in the garden during the growing season. I also do some volunteer work for my church. I tell people I'm "semi-retired."

30. How much longer do you plan to make plant signs? Ian will graduate from college in less than a year, so when he leaves the nest, I'll think about how long I want to keep up with the sign business. I imagine going for a few more years, health cooperating. I will consider selling the business at that time.

31. Do you miss Southern California and growing palms here? I miss the climate and my friends in Southern California. I don't miss the cost of living or the politics. I do not miss having to cut up 10 garbage cans of palm fronds on a weekly basis. Here in Northern Utah, I have one palm in the ground, a *Rhapidophyllum hystrix* (extremely slow growing, but the snow doesn't bother it), and a big pot of *Rhapis excelsa* that is a houseplant here during the winter.

32. What do you miss most about Southern California? I miss the beautiful Madagascar and New Caledonia palms in the Fallbrook garden. I don't miss the Livistonas, Phoenix and other spiny palms I grew too many of in the garden there.

33. What do you think of the collections that some members are now developing? There are some amazing palm gardens in Southern California now. Many more than when I started. There are so many gorgeous palms available to growers now that were unheard of back in the 70's.

34. What does the future hold for you and Lynnette? We've talked about buying a motorhome and traveling. None of my kids want to take over the business so that's not an option. If I were to sell the sign business, I'd like to visit Florida, where we've sold a large percentage of our signs.

35. Thanks, Gary. Can you provide us with your contact information?
Certainly:

Gary Wood, Owner

Plant Signs

1384 S 700 W

Springville, UT 84663

Phone: (801) 900-1182

<https://www.plantsigns.com>



"Dypsis ambositrae"

A gorgeous palm that is reknown for its "darker than dark" green fronds

Strahl garden



"Dypsis baf"
Strahl garden



Tracy Stahl, great host,
great garden. One of two
hosts who graciously
shared their outstanding
palm collections with us.

Q and A: Question and Answer 211 – 220: By Dave Bleistein and Don Tollefson. The answers to the questions are arrived at independently by each expert. Read what the experts say and see which expert you agree with.

211. I'm looking for a tropical or subtropical palm that grows approximately as fast as a king palm. Is there a palm you can recommend?

Dave Bleistein: A lot depends on where you are and what your ultimate size limitation is. If you have LOTS of space, particularly vertical, Roystoneas are rockets (almost 40 feet in about 12 years from a 7 gallon for an *R. borequeniana*). But they're also broad in the beam as they say, i.e., with thick trunks. Mine have trunks that range from 18" to three feet across at the base. Another possibility, once it reaches trunking size, is a *Dypsis leptocheilos*, the Teddy Bear. As soon as Teddy Bears form trunk, away they go. I have two Teddy Bears that are more than 30 feet tall after being planted in the ground as 2 gallons in 2005; the rapid growth started about 8 years ago. If you're in a frost-free location, *Veitchia arecina* can be breathtakingly fast. The "Foxy Lady," which is a hybrid between *Veitchia arecina* and *Wodyetia bifurcata*, is also very fast. If you're near the ocean, some of the New Caledonia palms are almost as fast as the ones listed above, including *Chambeyronia macrocarpa*. They seem to appreciate the higher humidity and more even year-round beach temperatures. *Caryota urens* are also fast, but their hexapanthic habit (fruit and die) of growing tall, then setting seed and falling over make them a problem, or at least an issue to prepare for. They'll hit 70-80 feet in about 12 years from five-gallon plants. Once they gain a bit of size after planting, *Dypsis pambana* can put on height rapidly as well.

Don Tollefson: King palms are among the fastest growers of tropical and subtropical varieties for Southern California. If you can get one of those Foxy Ladies (*Wodyetia* X *Veitchia arecina*), those are rockets that will actually dwarf a king palm in a height/speed race. Otherwise, there are only a few rare palm varieties that even come close to the king palm in terms of growth speed. That said, I would recommend trying the Teddy Bear (*Dypsis leptocheilos*), the Jade Flamethrower (*Chambeyronia macrocarpa*), the Ivory Flamethrower (*Chameyronia hookerii*) and

Kentiopsis oliviformis (no common name). I've found all four of these palm species to be fast growers in a coastal zone garden. Perhaps these species will grow quickly where you are as well.

212. Is it alright to fertilize palms with winter approaching?

Dave Bleistein: I'd hold off till spring. There's no telling when the freeze gods will get angry and take their anger out on fertilized palms.

Don Tollefson: Absolutely. I often can only find time to fertilize my palms in the winter and I find also with great results. Perhaps it's a situation where it requires time (weeks, months?) for irrigation saturation to deliver the fertilizer to the roots of the palms enabling the palms to uptake the fertilizer. Who knows? I just know that fertilizing in the winter works fine for me.

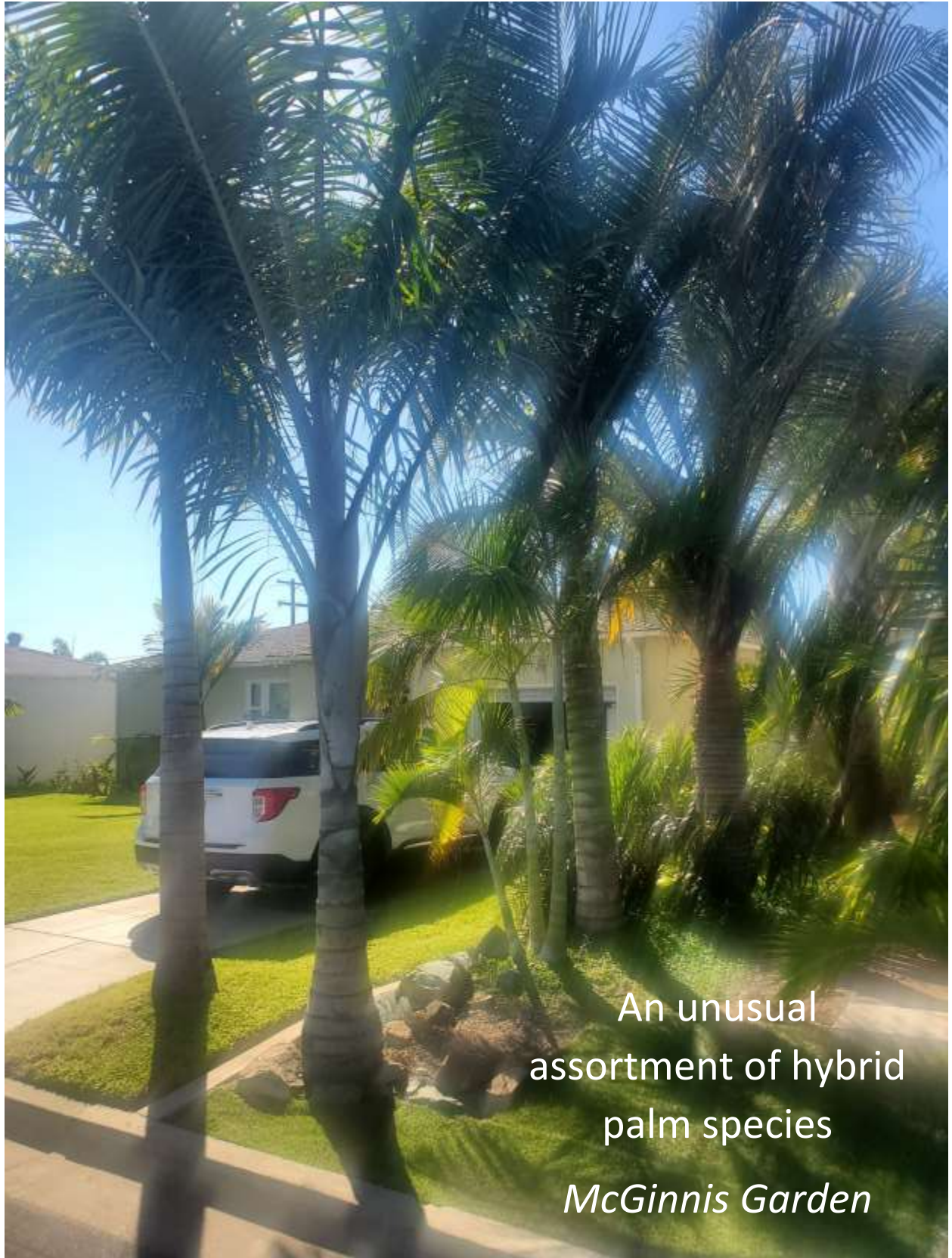
213. Why do I see so few Mexican fan palms and Canary Island date palms in palm collections?

Dave Bleistein: I can't speak for everyone else, but it's because I'm a palm snob, and want to show that there's a LOT more to palms than those two. I can see them all around me without leaving my palm-snobby yard. Though, I confess, when I see them out the airplane windows on final approach, I know I'm home again where I belong. If they were to go extinct, I'd miss the hell out of them.

Don Tollefson: This is because Mexican fan palms and Canary Island date palms are so common that they typically don't fit into the scheme of the private palm collections of most Palm Society members. In fact, Mexican fan palms and Canary Island date palms are so common and prolific, they have recently been placed on California's list of invasive species! To their credit, however, these two "invasive species" have attracted many people into the hobby of growing rare palms. In this vein, the Palm Society of Southern California should probably be named "The Rare Palm Society of Southern California" because rare palms are actually what most Palm Society members grow.

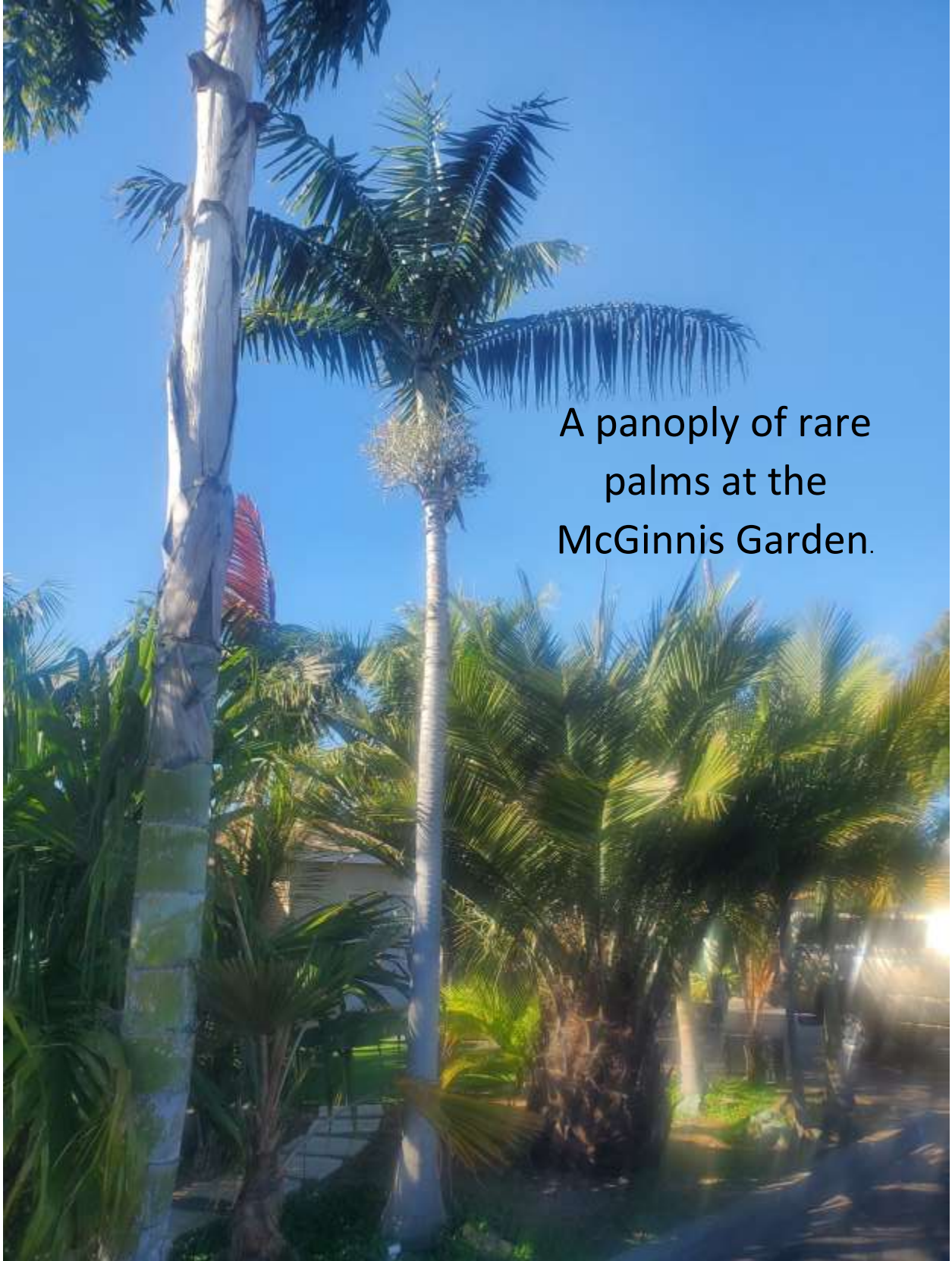


**A Sexy *"FOXY LADY"*
greet guests at this side
of the McGinnis garden**



An unusual
assortment of hybrid
palm species

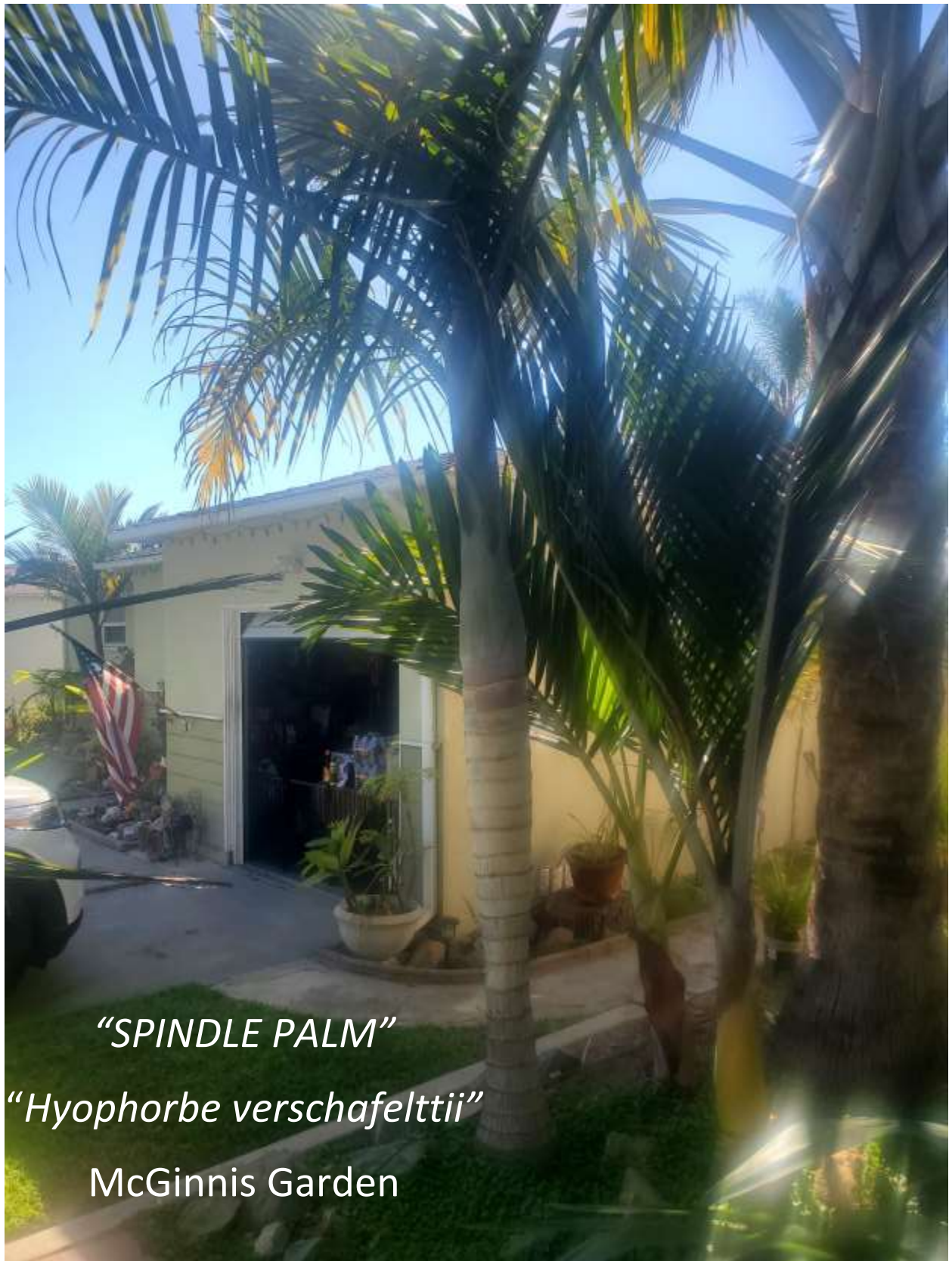
McGinnis Garden



A panoply of rare palms at the McGinnis Garden.



Sabal species
McGinnis garden



“SPINDLE PALM”

“Hyophorbe verschafeltii”

McGinnis Garden



Undescribed fan palm
McGinnis garden



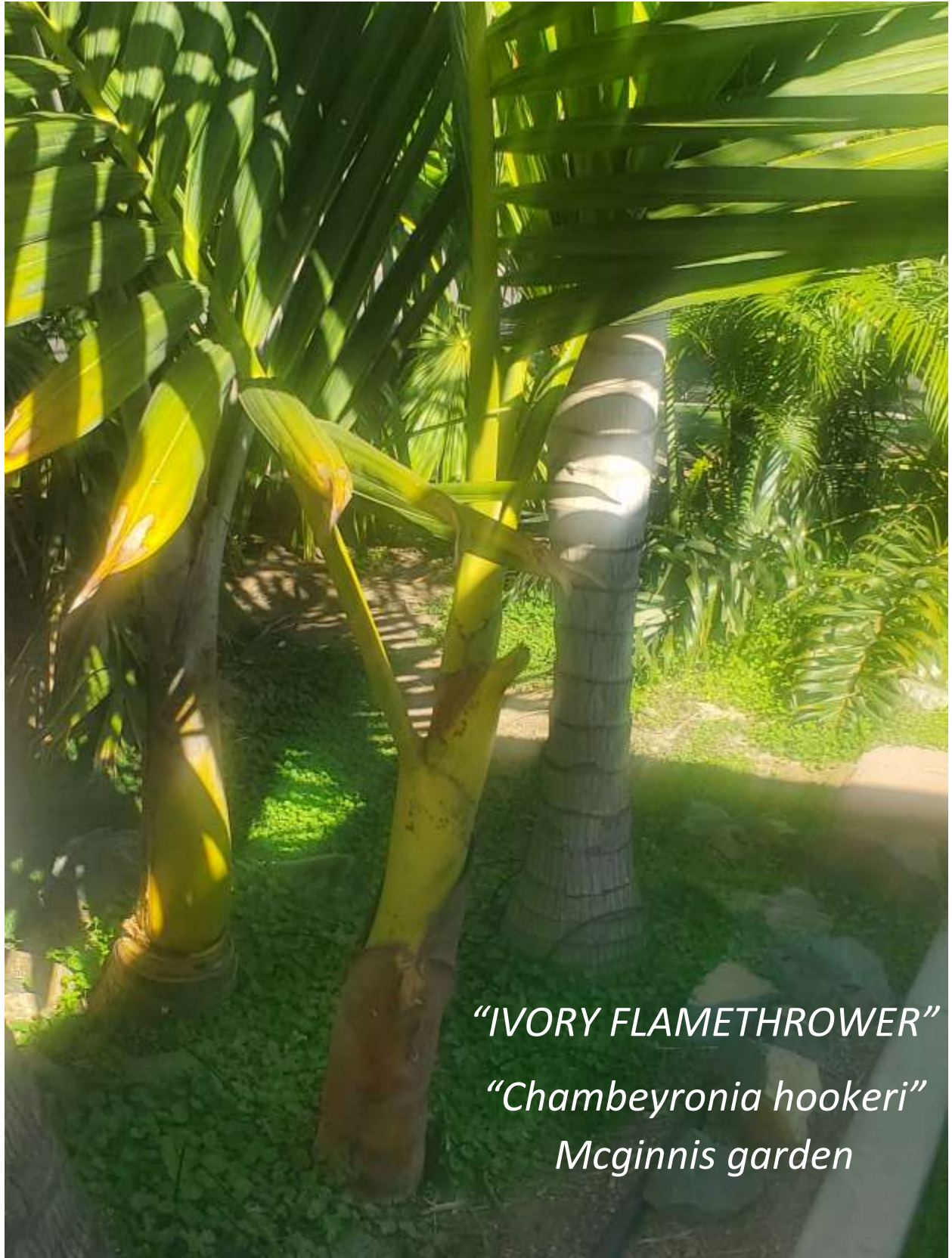
“Dypsis picrophylla”

One of the more rare
Syagrus species.

McGinnis garden



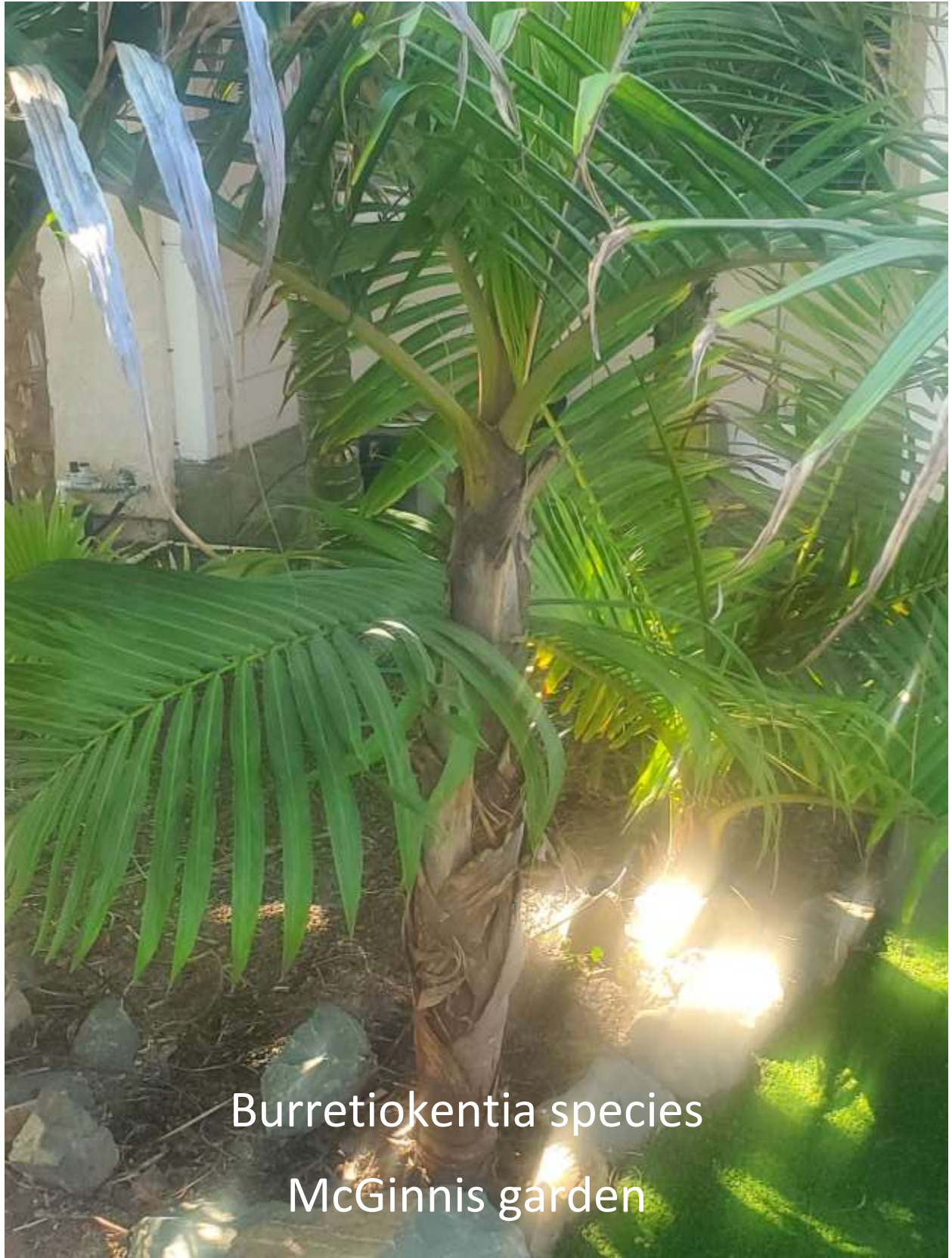
Yet Another unusual
Syagrus species



“IVORY FLAMETHROWER”

“Chambeyronia hookeri”

Mcginnis garden



Burretiokentia species

McGinnis garden

214. I loved the way you used to bleed the photos all the way off the pages of the e-Newsletter. Why did you stop doing that?

Dave Bleistein: No idea.

Don Tollefson: Glad you noticed because I liked the photos bleeding off the pages as well. But as with most things, it's "time and money!" In this instance it requires a substantial amount of time to manipulate the computer program to bleed photos completely off the page. It's "mega times" faster to simply click "save" and have the photos magically and instantaneously appear with the conventionally programmed border. The conventionally programmed border has been the standard since the beginning of (book making) time. So, photos and other images which esthetically and logically should bleed off the entire page have been relegated to this traditional default format with a meaningless white border around them wasting a valuable unused potential image space. So much for "time and money!"

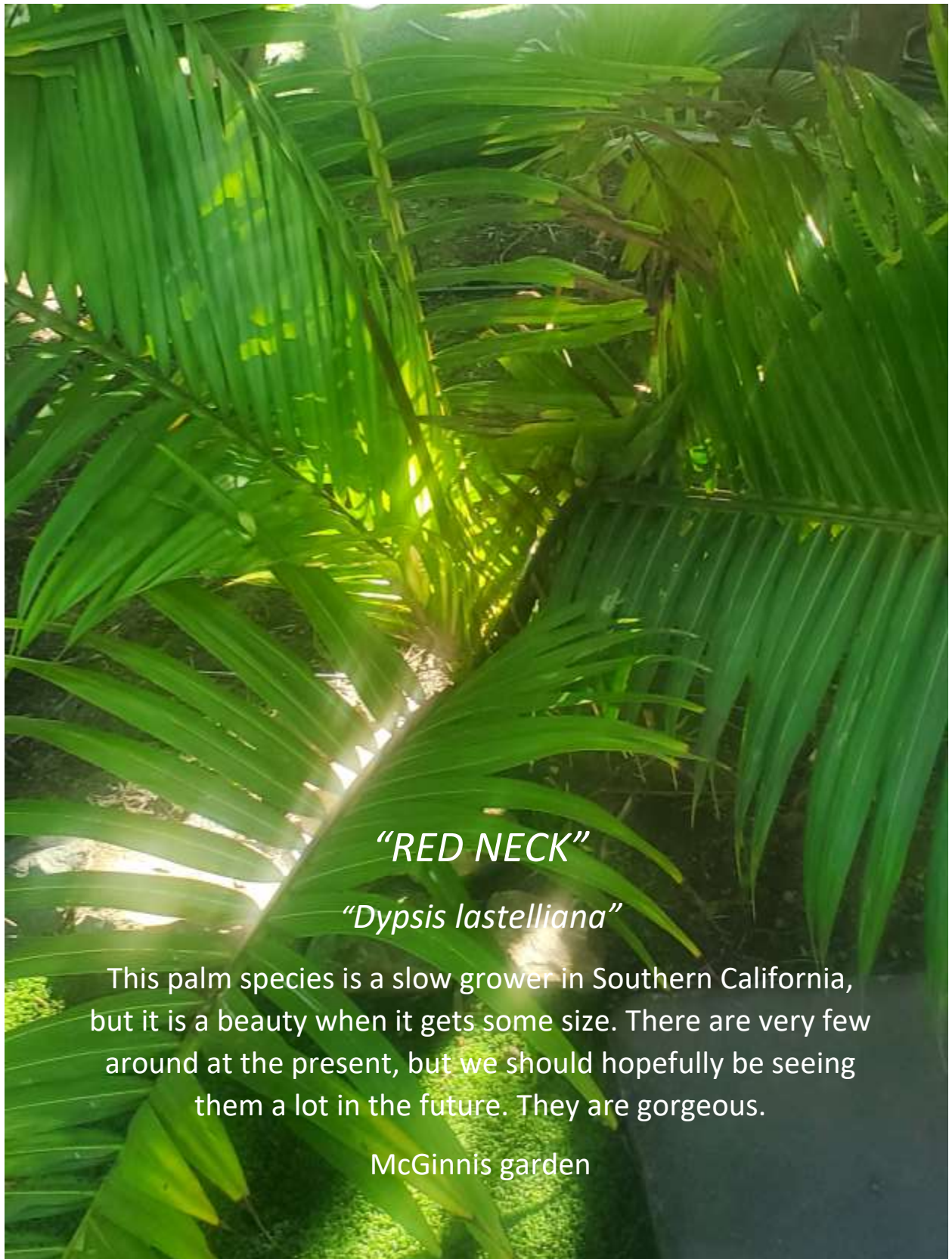
215. Sometimes the pictures of the e-Newsletter palms are so big it's hard for me to see the entire palm. Is there a way to reduce the size of the pictures if I want to (I'm not complaining btw)?

Dave Bleistein: You tell me.

Don Tollefson:

1. Open document.
2. Click "view" (menu bar, top of the page)
3. Click "page display"
4. Click "two page view"

This procedure provides a two-page view that makes it possible to read the e-Newsletter like a book with a page on the left and a page on the right providing complete page visibility of two complete pages side by side without having to scroll up or down or move the cursor.



“RED NECK”

“Dypsis lastelliana”

This palm species is a slow grower in Southern California, but it is a beauty when it gets some size. There are very few around at the present, but we should hopefully be seeing them a lot in the future. They are gorgeous.

McGinnis garden



“SHUTTLECOCK PALM”

“Rhopalostylis sapida”

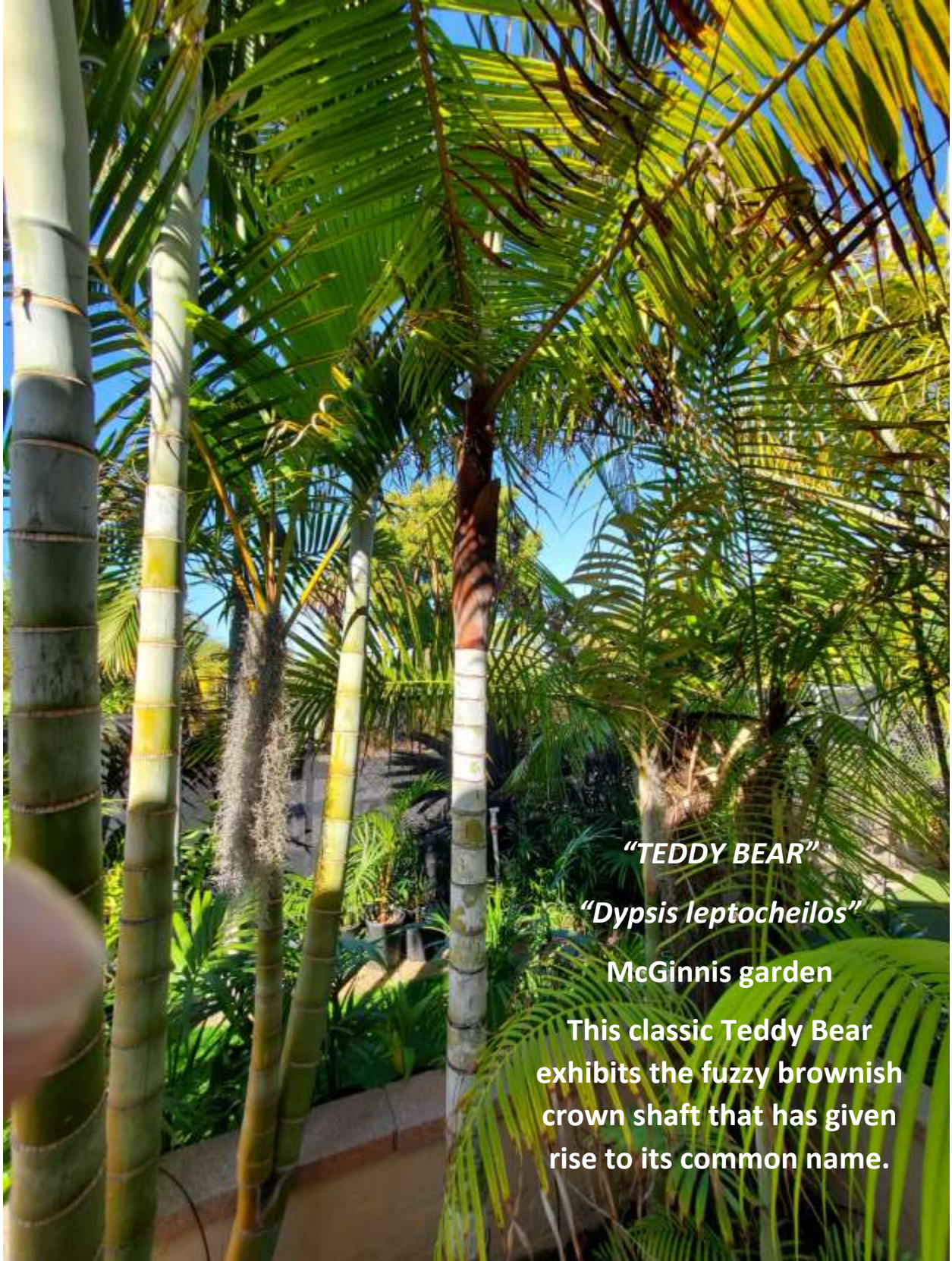


*“Kentiopsis
oliviformis”*

One of the many great
New Caledonia palms
that seem thrilled to be
living the Southern
California high life
McGinnis garden



It's doubtful there's a single Palm Society member reading this e-Newsletter that won't recognize the emblematic red frond arising from the crown shaft of this palm and know the palm's common name and botanical name. So, this palm's name identification is left to you.



“TEDDY BEAR”

“Dypsis leptochailos”

McGinnis garden

This classic Teddy Bear exhibits the fuzzy brownish crown shaft that has given rise to its common name.

216. I've been asked to be one of the garden hosts at a Palm Society meeting. Do you recommend that I label my palms and if yes, what's an easy, inexpensive way to label them?

Dave Bleistein: Labels are great, but they're also a lot of work, which is why I haven't done them. I can't think of an easy, inexpensive way, but bring it on! I might just do it.

Don Tollefson: This is an important question that comes up often. But first, thanks for maybe being a host (it's both an honor and a lot of work). As a viewer of each and every garden tour, I can tell you from experience that somehow providing the names of your palms is not necessary, but extremely helpful. I recommend the easiest, quickest way you can come up with that's effective and inexpensive. I've seen sticky labels that are sticky enough to adhere to the trunks of the palms placed at or about eye level with the botanical name of the palm written on the sticky label. Handouts are excellent with the palms somehow numbered and names corresponding to numbers on stakes near the palms. Typed information along with the name of the palm on a handout is HUGE because this provides pertinent the information about the palm at the exact time someone is viewing the palm, and the handout can be taken home for future reference. Any simple, inexpensive system that identifies the palm without having to ask the host for its name is like gold. You can also always request reimbursement from the Palm Society for the cost of some or all of an inexpensive identification handout if you host a Palm Society meeting.

217. How do you feel about identifying your palms with botanical garden level plant signs?

Dave Bleistein: If you're gonna do it, I say go for the botanical name, including synonyms, place, native to, and date of planting.

Don Tollefson: It's fabulous if it's the look and result you are looking for. Professional botanical level garden plant signs are a great way to present a garden and we all know the importance of plant identification. Many collectors prefer the botanical garden look provided by professional signs identifying their palms. This is particularly common in high-end properties with large specialized collections. But I also see it in smaller gardens, some with just a few palms.



“Prestoa montana”

Strangely an uncommon palm considering its close proximity to Southern California (Puerto Rico origin), its beauty and how well it performs here.



Behold! A Hyophorbe convention!

“Hyophorbe verschafeltii,”
“Hyophorbe lagenacaulis” and
“Hyophorbe indica”

McGinnis garden



"SAMURAI PALM"

"Clinostigma savoryanum"

**From you guessed it, Japan
(Bonin Islands) south of the
Japanese mainland)**

McGinnis Garden

I don't provide plant identification except when there is a Palm Society meeting at my garden. Otherwise, I prefer to attempt to impart the ambiance of truly natural, undisturbed habitat completely devoid of civilization and weeds. How do I explain the Italian water fountain? The garage and the German sports cars in the garage? The countryside cottage with solar panels on the roof? I can't. It's simply a hybrid conundrum anachronism cross.

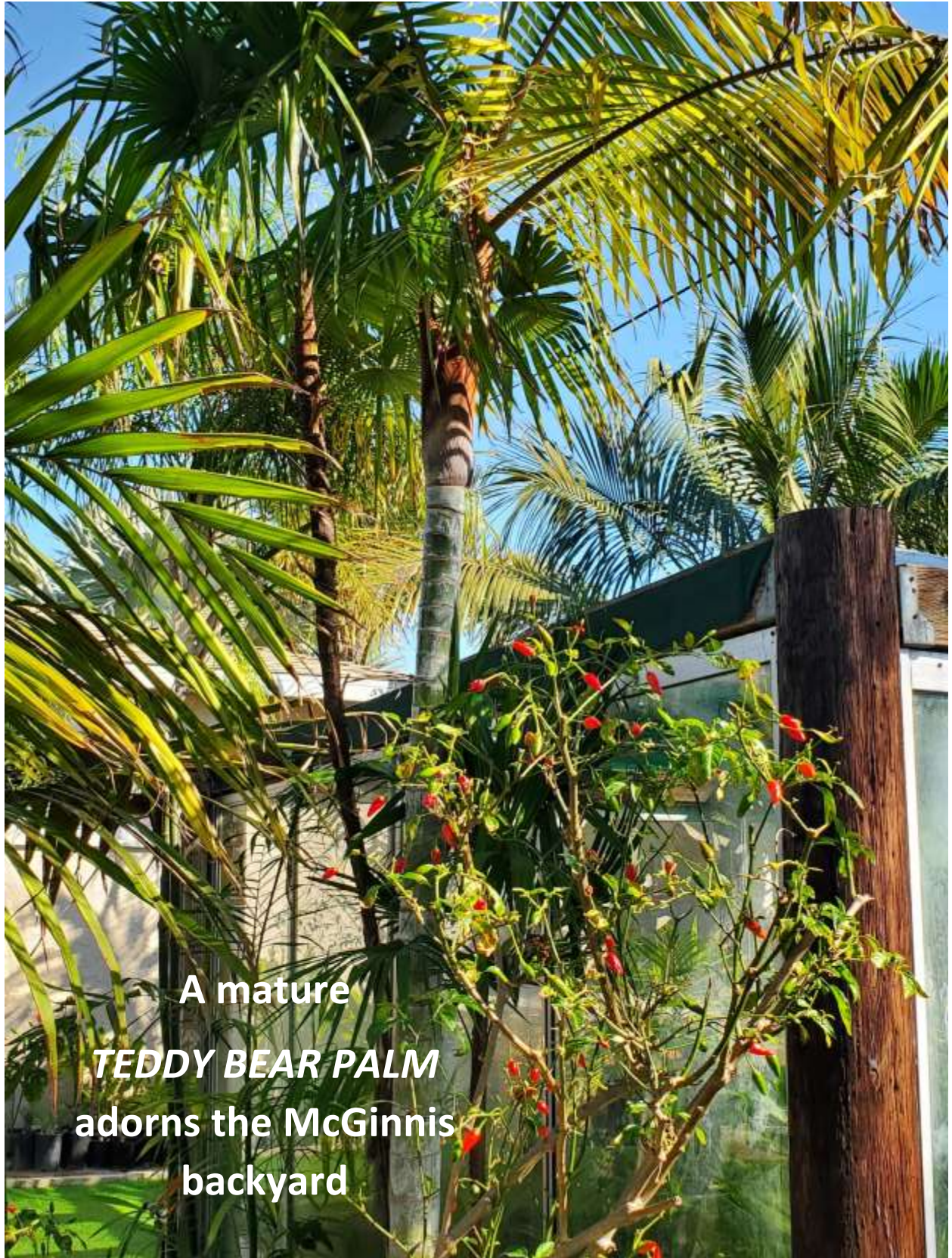
218. Do you think the hobby of growing rare palms in Southern California is increasing in popularity?

Dave Bleistein: Good question, and I don't know in the overall sense. That said, new people are coming along and showing interest, and I'm doing my best to be a resource to kindle and nurture that interest. People see my garden and sometimes they show an interest, in which case I offer to give them a tour if they want. Once the cops were looking for someone and one of the officers was agog over my red-leaf Chambeyronia. There's two clouds I see: one is water shortages, and the other is the increasing cost of real property. The first can be dealt with by intelligent management by way of proper species selection, mulching, etc., at least for now, though if things get bad enough for long enough shortage-wise, there could be trouble. There's a bunch of ways to deal with the second, but they often involve luck.

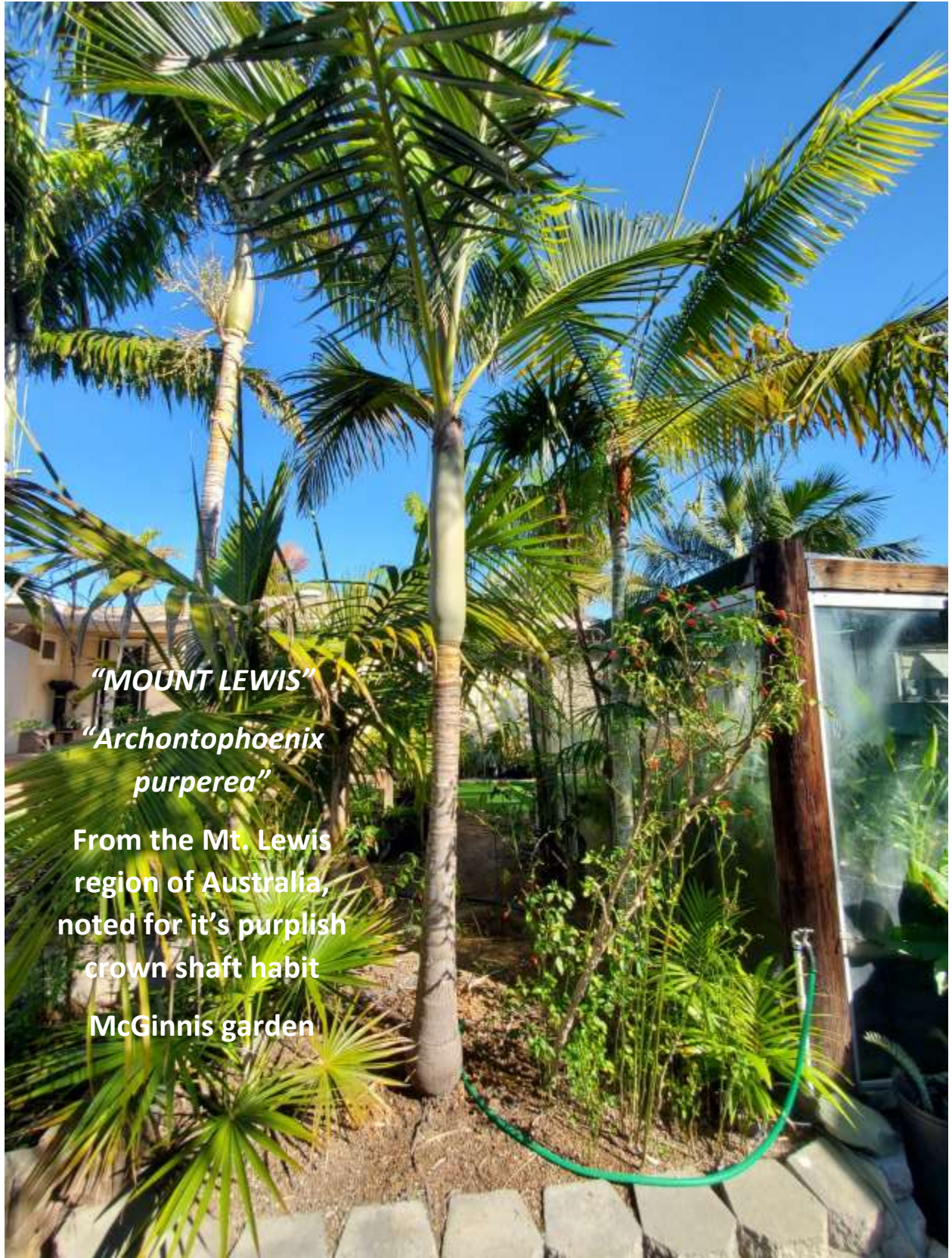
Don Tollefson: It's absolutely booming! There are more excellent "blow your socks off" palm collections today than ever before. And most of these collections are far better than the collections of old. But in spite of these numerous, fabulous new collections, the hobby of growing palms in Southern California is far from growing in the leaps and bounds that it should be growing in. Unfortunately, most of the significant collections (95% or more) are in Orange and San Diego Counties with very few anywhere else. Why? Who knows?

219, I've seen spectacular, eye-catching gardens at the past several Palm Society meetings. Why is it that there are not more of these gardens?

Dave Bleistein: It takes time to have a serious palm garden, which most people don't tend to think they have.



A mature
TEDDY BEAR PALM
adorns the McGinnis
backyard



"MOUNT LEWIS"

***"Archontophoenix
purpurea"***

**From the Mt. Lewis
region of Australia,
noted for it's purplish
crown shaft habit
McGinnis garden**

The good news is that you can have a killer garden on a small city lot. You don't need towering fifty-foot-tall specimens to have a great garden! If you have a grand garden in the making, host us now! We love to coo over little babies that grow into glorious forests of lovely palms.

Don Tollefson: Two reasons. **First**, because it is difficult and time “requiring” (“requiring” as in calendar years for palms to grow as opposed to time “consuming” as in hours and minutes for hands-on gardening) to develop a palm collection sufficient enough to produce the distinct “tropical look” that motivates others to copy and also partake of this hobby. **Second**, because it is difficult for someone who is inexperienced to develop any sort of garden, let alone a garden in a temperate climate consisting of rare tropical and subtropical palms. I have long speculated that for every person who successfully develops a rare palm collection in Southern California there must be ten or more who fail. Imagine how rapidly the hobby would proliferate if say nine out of ten people were successful rather than just one out of ten. It’s not hard to develop a top-notch palm collection. But if you consider this failure rate, you would entirely disagree. My advice? Religiously read the Q and A section of this e-Newsletter and if you are a new member, purchase the back issues and research them as well. All the information and photographs you need are there. It can be done and it’s happening all the time. You just have to know how to do it.

220. You mentioned in the previous issue of the e-Newsletter that the botanists have changed the names of the New Caledonia and Madagascar palms. Why do the botanists so frequently change the names of palms and how do you feel about this?

Dave Bleistein: Hoo boy, one of those weighty philosophical discussions. On the one hand, I think that using botanical names is a good thing, and I think that regular, continuing study of all life forms is good (including ourselves, especially to aid that longevity stuff, which helps the palm garden enjoyment, if nothing else!) When someone proclaims "gospels" in science, time to be wary, though it's also understandable why the temptation to do so is strong.

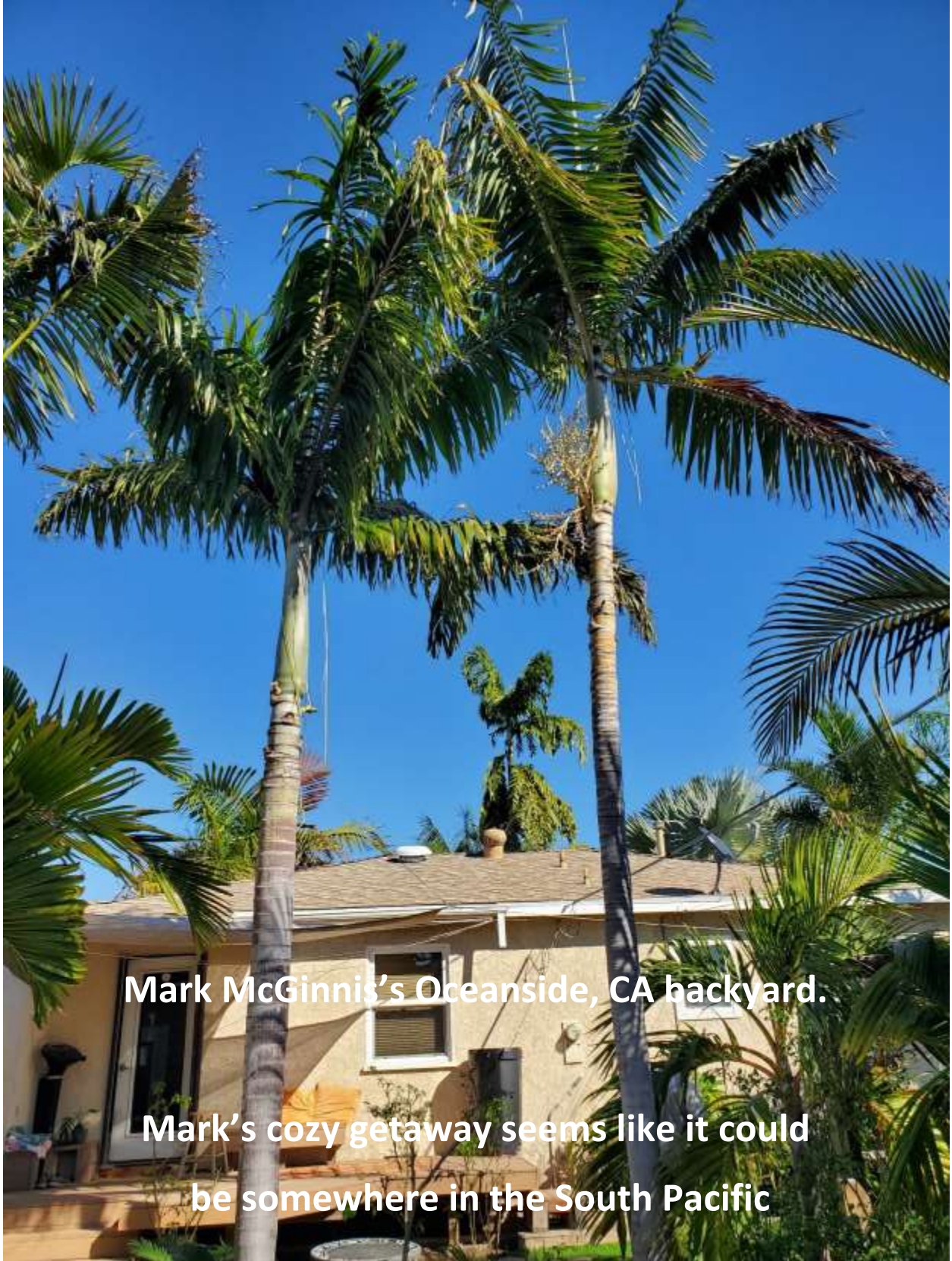


KENTIA PALM

"Howea forsteriana"

McGinnis garden

This lovely palm grows on Lord Howe Island off the coast of Australia at almost the identical latitude of Southern California. If you have trouble growing this palm please let the rest of us know your secret.



Mark McGinnis's Oceanside, CA backyard.

**Mark's cozy getaway seems like it could
be somewhere in the South Pacific**

Back before I got entangled in this palm madness, I went to the University of California, Riverside ("UCR") which had an advanced class on binomial plant nomenclature. I took it, to be honest, because I didn't want to fiddle with those "cattle call" "breadth requirement" classes you're asked to take so you don't become a one-hit wonder academically. I was able to take a harder class, and this was a great one, with stimulating discussions based on texts that were fascinating to read (I got an "A" which was also nice),

The big pointy thrust of that class was that plant naming developed over time, and the underlying reasons and rationales did, too. In early times, it was customary to name plants and animals for the "patrons" who funded the research, which, to at least some extent, has been replaced by naming to reflect something about what's being named. To the extent that naming, and in particular, naming to reflect relationships among species changes as new understandings develop. I'm all in favor of that.

But, on the other hand, constantly shifting names, even for "good" reasons, often leads to confusion, and efforts to deal with that get cumbersome after a while. Like saying *Chrysalidocarpus* (*Dypsis*) *lutescens*, particularly since its original name was *Chrysalidocarpus* before it got lumped into *Dypsis* 20 some odd years ago. I do think it's great that they took *Vonitra* out of *Dypsis*, since it never should have been there in the first place, at least in my humble opinion. It seemed to me a bit like putting gorillas and chimps in the same genus as humans; the first are hairy (like *Vonitra*) and the second aren't so much, more like *Dypsis*.

These soapboxes do get a bit tipsy after awhile . . .

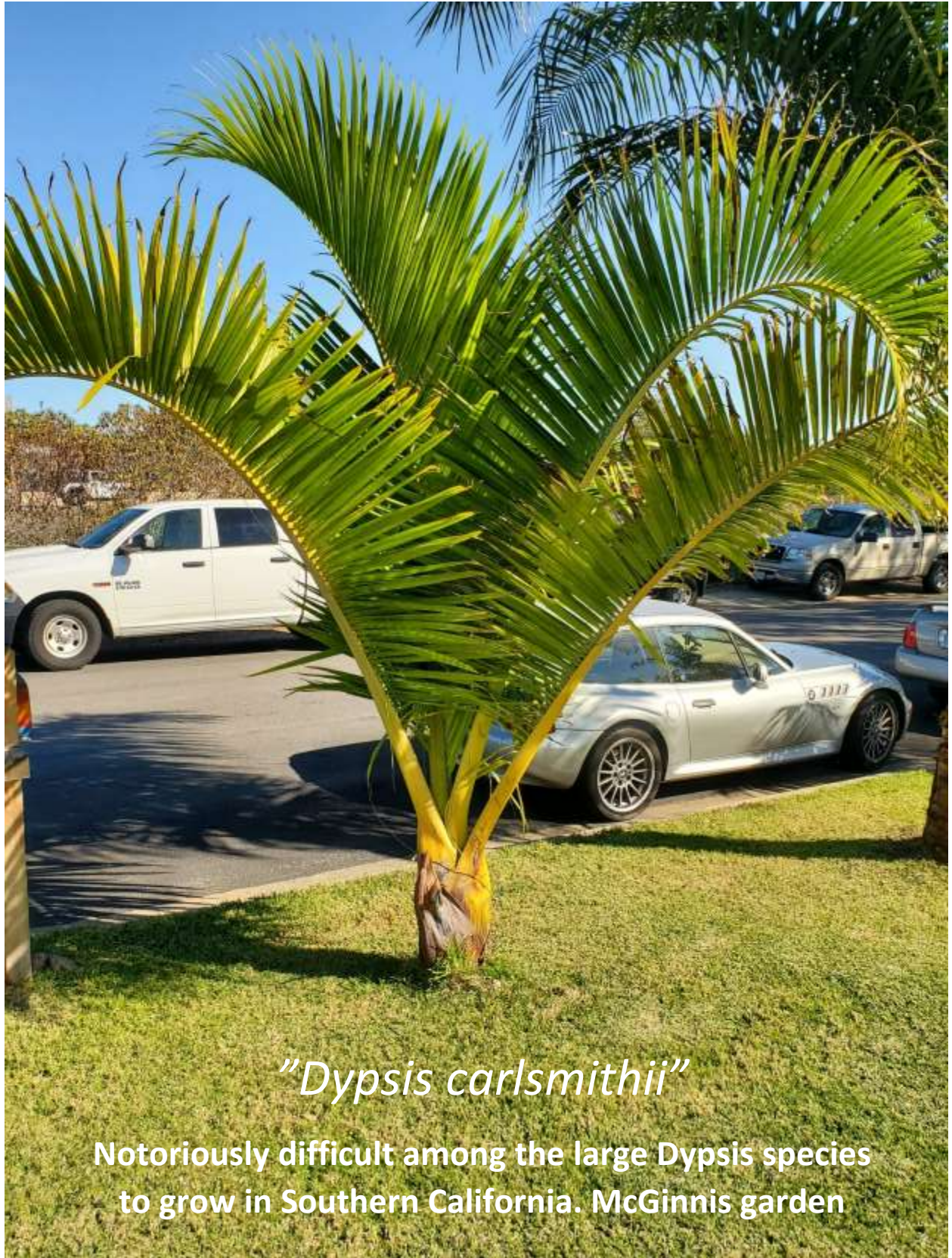
In any case, I won't let a little nomenclature confusion, disagreement or controversy spoil the fun of palm gardening. Don't be afraid to explain if you have to. Happy palm growing.

Don Tollefson: *Seaforthia elegans*! *Arecastrum romanzoffianum*! These are the botanical names I learned for the King palm and Queen palm thirty-five years ago. Those names were fine then and they would be fine now except they were changed for no particularly good reason at the whim of "the botanists." It is the botanists who provide identifying names for palms via a recognized format which unfortunately at this time falls within their sole purview.



“Ravenea jullietiae” McGinnis garden

Julietiae is one of the most attractive Raveneas. Julietiae has the peculiar habit of changing in appearance as it matures, and begins to become a juvenile. This is a juvenile Julietiae on its way to becoming an adult. Although only a juvenile, this is one of the larger specimens in Southern California because Julietiae was a late arrival here. In any event, Julietiae is a beauty!!!



"Dypsis carlsmithii"

Notoriously difficult among the large Dypsis species to grow in Southern California. McGinnis garden

Simply stated, we are saddled with “the botanists,” we are saddled with the botanists’ name-changing “musical chairs” format of naming and renaming palms, and we are saddled with all the unnecessary work, time and effort of learning new names, changing databases, creating new labels and adjusting to using new names for palms rather than simply using their old names that we previously knew perfectly well, were previously perfectly happy with and previously had used fluently for many years. God save the King (palm) and God save the Queen (palm) from this mindless, needless dystopia.

Palm Society e-Newsletter, January 2023

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