



Palm Society of Southern California  
e-Newsletter, July 2022

Orange Julius

This gem of a palm displaying an orange crown shaft is an undescribed *Euterpe* species

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**Palm Society e-Newsletter Overview by Don Tollefson:** The July 2022 Palm Society 25 page e-Newsletter contains the June 2022 Palm Society meeting recap, 13 full page color photos of rare palms and companion plants and the regular “Q and A,” Questions 181 - 190 of the 200 most commonly asked questions about palm cultivation.

**June 18, 2022 Meeting Recap by Don Tollefson:** The “Huntington Beach Palm Tour” once again featured two great coastal gardens, hosted by long time Palm Society members John Boyer and Guy Young. These two gardens are significant, must-see “bookend collections” in close proximity to the Pacific Ocean. In this respect (“bookend collections”), it was much like the garden tour at our previous Palm Society meeting.

These are two great gardens and two great hosts as the Palm Society of Southern California continues to hold meetings, garden tours and camaraderie that position us as one of the world’s premier garden societies.

### **Q and A, Questions and Answers: 181 – 190:**

**181. I’m a new Palm Society member living in San Luis Obispo. I want the best palm collection I can possibly have. We have a similar, but slightly different climate here in San Luis Obispo than in Southern California. How can I learn what palms will grow here?**



*“Bismarckia nobilis”*

Bismarckia nobilis continues to gain popularity as a feature palm in Southern California palm collections.



Guy Young and John Boyer. Our gracious ongoing, repeat hosts, once again hosting another, great Palm Society meeting. Thanks to both of you

**Dave Bleistein:** I would suspect that any palms that do well in, say, Malibu should at least have a chance to do well there. That said, I'd be aware of cold sinks, etc., where cold air could accumulate and cause freeze damage. A friend of mine who used to live there says the weather is like spring all year round, meaning that it almost never gets really hot like some areas do, nor does it get and stay cold often. Really tender tropicals like Areca, etc., that might be good further south, I'd be wary of, but try. I took a trip to SLO about 30 years ago, and I remember there were some gorgeous *Rhopalostylis sapidas* growing in what looked like a trailer park.

**Don Tollefson:** Five suggestions. **First**, start with a good canopy. **Second**, touch base with an experienced grower in your area. We have at least one hardcore Palm Society member from your area and I'm sure he'd be glad to help you. **Third**, purchase several one-gallon or, so, sized palms and grow them in containers outdoors in protected areas and see how they perform. **Fourth**, plant those palms that do well outdoors in the ground in the spring and continue growing the palms that don't do as well outdoors in containers. **Fifth**, attend the regular Southern California Palm Society meetings as ideas will abound from arrival to departure.

**182. I read your question about the difficulties of water features a couple of issues ago. Regardless, I do want some sort of water feature in my garden. What's the easiest water feature to maintain following installation?**

**Dave Bleistein:** I'm afraid I have no experience in this area at all, alas.



*“Chambeyronia macrocarpa”*

**Don Tollefson:** Once installed, a water fountain is easy to maintain. Far easier to maintain than waterfalls, streams ponds and other water features. Be sure your fountain has an openable bottom drain for easy removal of water. Also, a built in, water shutoff for refilling the water level (the water level will need to be replenished every few days due to evaporation). I have a water fountain in my yard (don't do what I do, do what I say do) that I installed because of the way a water feature attracts songbirds, hummingbirds, butterflies. and crows (I like crows because crows are smarter than I am). I installed a large fountain, designed, sculpted and shipped to me from the Tuscany region of Italy. This fountain was delivered in concert with the manufacturer's USA distributing partner who, surprisingly enough, is "Lamps Plus!"

**183.Regarding the current and future water shortage, what's your take on all the technology for removing moisture from the air and using it for supplying domestic water needs?**

**Dave Bleistein:** Excellent question! It's a fascinating idea, but anytime you pull something out of somewhere, there's a potential for problems. I'd certainly explore the idea, but also beware that it might not be the big panacea hoped for. Desalination of sea water comes to mind; you have to put the resulting brine somewhere, and lots of stuff gets sucked up in the intakes.

**Don Tollefson:** I have always been amazed by all the water runoff produced (wasted) by air conditioners. In fact, I always try to direct A/C water runoff from any of my mini split A/C units towards one of my nearby palms. But no way will water capture from air as we currently know it support the irrigation needs of landscape and agriculture. I don't

think desalinization can handle our future water needs either because of the magnitude of our ever increasing future water needs

So, like the rest of us, I do nothing while I sit and wait for our current water supply to run out. The best solution in my mind is aqueducts bringing water from the Pacific Northwest and Canada where water is abundant to the Southwestern United States and Mexico where water is sorely needed and paying those water abundant areas for the purchase of their valuable resource. This is not a novel idea. Has anyone heard of the Roman aqueducts?

**In the many answers about fertilizer, I don't recall ever reading anything about fertilizer spikes. What's your take on fertilizer spikes for use with growing palms?**

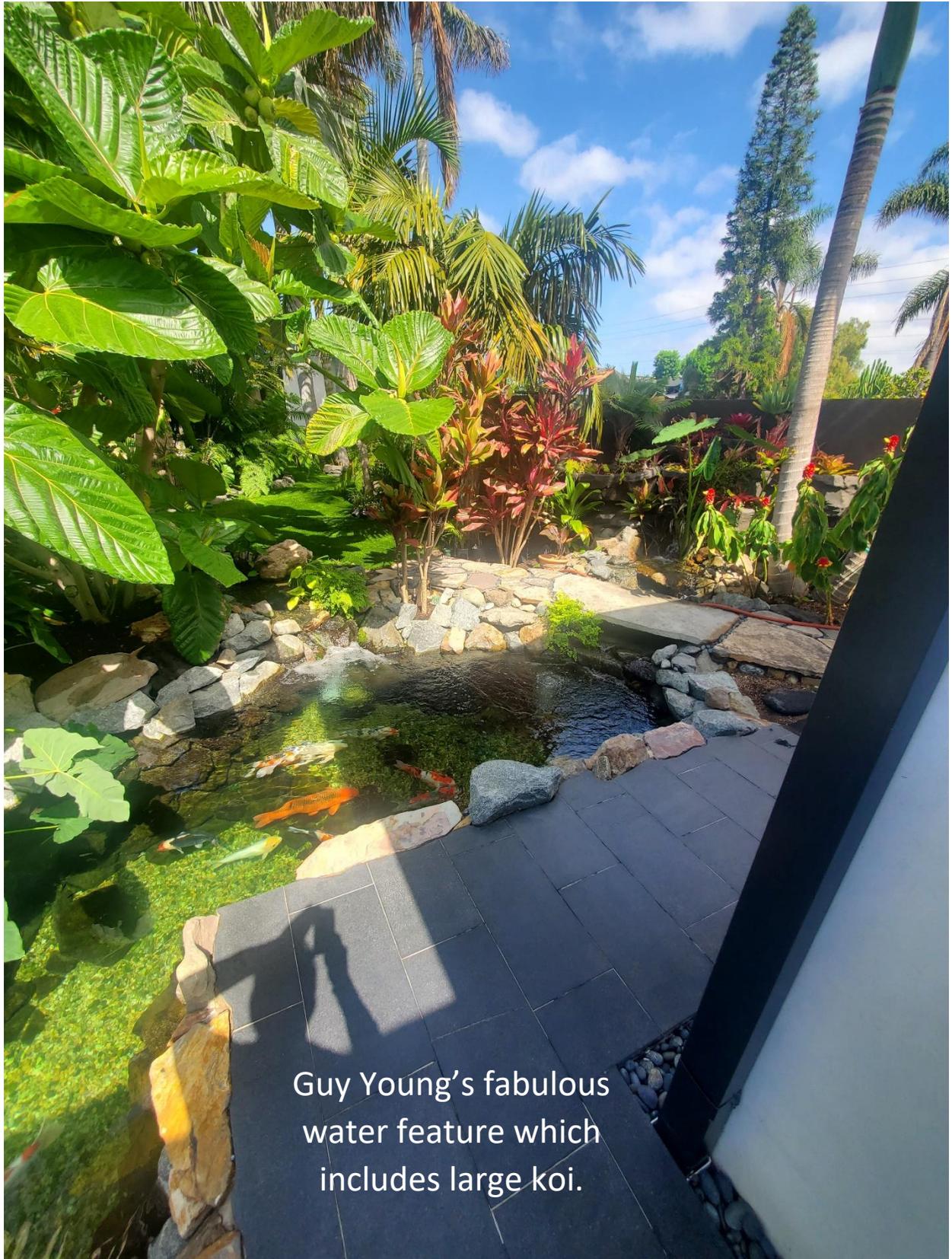
**Dave Bleistein:** Personally, I've never found spikes to be a great way to put on fertilizer; when I feed, I usually toss on some granular in the root zone and water in, or, if I'm in a bigger hurry, douse with a shot of liquid Miracle Gro or the like. With spikes you have to drive them into the soil, etc. (Getting old and bending over is harder than it used to be.) That said, as long as the nutrients are right for what you're feeding, I see no reason not to. The big thing to look for is micronutrients, which are a common cause of deficiencies.

**Don Tollefson:** Fertilizer spikes are hardened, railroad shaped spikes, consisting of fertilizer. They are meant to be hammered into the ground adjacent to plants to provide fertilizer for those plants as the fertilizer breaks down during the watering process. I use Jobe's Fertilizer Spikes. The chemical ratio is 11-3-4, which varies a bit from the conventional

ratio of 5-3-5 recommended for palm fertilizer by Don Hodel and some of the other palm experts. But I don't think the palms mind much. I like the spikes because I know they are effective at providing fertilizer to my palms if the water from my drip system fails to fall directly on the standard fertilizer mix that I routinely apply at the base of my palms (which invariably happens). I also think it's not a bad idea to provide fertilizer from more than one source to increase the chance that your palms will receive adequate fertilizer. The main issue with fertilizer spikes is they are far more difficult to install than regular fertilizer mix. So, you can install them the hard way or you can install them the easy way. Being the lazy and totally good for nothing palm enthusiast that I am, I choose the easy way. What I do is run my drip system two or three days in a row and get the ground good and soggy below the drip emitters. Then, I physically drive a breaker bar into the ground where the water drips from the emitter onto the soil. The breaker bar slogs into the wet soil six or seven inches with one thrust. Then, when I extract the breaker bar, voila! There is exactly enough room to install a fertilizer spike. Sometimes I have to pound the spike a bit, but it's not a big deal. Do I think fertilizer spikes are as good or better than conventional bulk fertilizing? I have no idea. But I hope to find out over the next two or three years.

**185. Does the Southern California Palm Society have any sort of money or property donation system so that donations can be made to the Palm Society.**

**Dave Bleistein:** I'm not sure what, exactly, "system" means. The PSSC has just become a federally recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization for which donations are tax deductible, the exact parameters of which I don't know. Those wishing to donate should consult their tax expert.



Guy Young's fabulous water feature which includes large koi.



“*Cyphophoenix elegans*”



*"Dyopsis decipiens"*

**Don Tollefson:** I'd like to defer to the Southern California Palm Society's treasurer, Kathy VanTripp, to answer this question. Kathy has single handedly put the time and effort into obtaining our recently granted 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization status. Congratulations Kathy and please go ahead.

**Kathy VanTripp:** The Palm Society of Southern California, Inc. is now a nonprofit, tax-exempt, charitable organization (tax ID number 33-0254282) under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. All donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

**Don Tollefson:** Does this mean donations of almost any kind can be accepted, including, but not limited to property?

**Kathy VanTripp:** Yes, we can accept vehicles, property and cash. Cash is best as we don't have to deal with disposing of the vehicle or property.

**186. If donations were to be made to the Palm Society, how would those donations be held and distributed?**

**Dave Bleistein:** I don't know.

**Don Tollefson:** To date, we've never received such donations. We'll just have to blow up that bridge when we come to it!



“Little Red Riding Hood” (*Lafa zamanga*) a small clustering palm deriving its common name from its distinct, red, newly emergent fronds.



*"Dypsis lanceolata"*

One of the great, fast growing, clustering Dypsis that grows well in Southern California.

**187. I've been contacted to possibly opening up my garden for an upcoming Palm Society meeting. Do I need to identify my palms and if so, what's the best method of identifying my palms?**

**Dave Bleistein:** It's best to do that if you can, but if you can't PSSC members will be glad to help. Labels and signs are nice, but not necessary.

**Don Tollefson:** Most guests touring your garden are going to enjoy your garden whether your palms are identified or not. But there will be many guests, including several "palm nuts" who will be scrutinizing your palms and inquiring as to both the botanical and the common names of certain specimens. So, if you have the time, and know the botanical and common names of your palms, it's an excellent upgrade to identify your palms in anticipation of those guests. Plus, it will suffice to provide an excellent, unguided tour of your palm garden. There are a few good ways that I am aware of to provide palm identification. The traditional method is with professional plant placards like those used in botanical gardens. This is a professional labeling system that requires signs to be made with an expensive, placardmaking machine. Member Gary Woods has such a machine and sells this type of placards. Another method, used at a recent meeting by Brett Qua, is to tape small plastic labels to the trunk of each palm slightly below eye level. That worked beautifully as we toured Brett's Garden. A third method is the "unguided palm tour" technique I used four years ago when the Palm Society meeting was held at my garden. To guide yourself through the garden. I put numbered stakes at the base of each palm and provided a handout with the name of each palm corresponding to the numbers. My handout also included a short blurb about each palm that I felt would be useful to guests. It was my way of providing a private guided tour of my garden for each and every

individual guest The tour was arranged in a circle around the property perimeter so guests could see and read about every single palm as they toured the garden. Like I said, if you have the time and energy to label your palms, it's an excellent upgrade.

**188. My neighbor wants to have a palm collection like mine. He is willing to pay for my time and effort to do the installation and start up. He wants to start his collection with a nice row of palms on his front parkway. I want to plant fairly large palms that will also grow quickly once planted. What palm species would you suggest for a reasonably quick "WOW" factor?**

**Dave Bleistien:** The answer to this will necessarily depend on where the garden is. Advice that's good for, say, Fallbrook might not be so good for Fontana. Also, a lot depends on the "parkway." Royals might be great, provided there's no cars nearby and the climate is right; otherwise, maybe not.

**Don Tollefson:** A few possibilities come to mind. If you want rare, exotic palms, that eliminates queen palms or king palms as they are too common. You can, however, use some of the rare king palms. There are four varieties of rare king palms: *Archontophoenix myolensis*, *Archontophoenix purpurea*, *Archontophoenix tuckeri* and *Archontophoenix maximus*. These are all good choices because they grow quickly and exhibit stunning, lime green crown shafts as well as stunning, lime green upper trunks. *Kentiopsis oliviformis* would fare well in a parkway. It is a fastgrowing, upright palm that resembles a king palm so much so that I believe some day, *Kentiopsis oliviformis* will be

renamed *Archontophoenix oliviformis*. *Chambeyronia macrocarpa* is a possibility, but it probably doesn't grow quickly enough for most parkway situations. Actually, any fastgrowing, medium to large palm will work wonderfully. "Fastgrowing" eliminates most of the gorgeous, large, "snail slowgrowing" *Dypsis* species. There is *Dypsis oniliiensis* "weeping variety," that I refer to as the "Cry Baby Palm." The Cry Baby Palm is as fast growing as a king palm, but gets only about 2/3rds as tall. My final suggestion is what Jeff Marcus has coined "Foxy Lady." This is a hybrid between *Veitchia arecina* and *Wodyetia bifurcata*. It demonstrates extreme hybrid vigor, growing faster than any other palm I have observed in Southern California. I planted five Foxy Ladies in my parkway six years ago and they are now all more than twenty-five feet tall. If you can find Foxy Ladies, they are a good bet because they are fast growers and "drop dead" gorgeous.

**189. I attended a Palm Society meeting a few years ago in Whittier. The owner told me he never had to water his palms once they were established. Is this the norm for palms or is this unusual?**

**Dave Bleistein:** I'd say extremely, highly, unusual! I suppose it's possible if someone has a true desert garden, but I can't recall anyone hosting such a PSSC meeting that wasn't out in the actual desert.

**Don Tollefson:** This is unusual. A better explanation for this will most likely come from my writing partner, Dave Bleistein, who lives near Whittier in La Habra. I can only assume this has something to do with the location of the area in relation to subterranean water drainage from the San Gabriel Mountains. If this is true, this area will become a fantastic draw as a future property destination for palm growers and their gardens. Currently, the most highly sought area for growing rare palms is the Fallbrook area of North San Diego County based on climate.



Can you tell "*Rhopolosylis sapida*" from "*Rhopolostylis baueri*"? Because I often can't. To me this is Sapida and whichever it is, it's a beauty. What do you think? Editor



**Cohost Guy Young disappeared from the planet for almost five years while performing his remodel. It's sensational including this amazing, artistically state of the art, swimming pool.**

This Whittier location is based on subsurface water drainage. As water restrictions kick in and increase, I can see how an area that lacks the need for assisted watering due to natural subterranean water drainage from the San Gabriel Mountains could become a hot spot for growing palms.

**190. There's been a lot of discussion about the Annual Banquet. Whether we should have it in August instead of January, where we should have it, should we have a speaker, should we have a banquet at all. What's the latest in terms of the Annual Banquet?**

**Dave Bleistein:** The matter is still under discussion. The general parameter issues are, however: (a) the old practice of having the banquet at a hotel or resort has become prohibitively expensive; (b) this means that the best hosting places are botanical gardens, but, some, like the Huntington, are also too costly; so (c) the ones that will work are also coveted by other groups like ours, and therefore very competitive. One major thought has been to have the event in August, which means that it can be outdoors. Another thought is at a large enough private palm garden, though there aren't many that will work well. For what it's worth, the right speaker can make a difference, but who that is depends on who you ask and when. I intend to make a point of soliciting thoughts from the members about this, via word of mouth and emailed questionnaires.

**Don Tollefson:** There are several major moving parts here and right now, you know as much as the rest of us. First, the annual banquet requires a facility that is large enough to host a sitdown, catered meal. Large facilities such as the LA Arboretum and Huntington Gardens have become extremely expensive to rent in recent years. Smaller, yet still suitable locations get gobbled up for weddings which are far bigger and better money makers than garden events. So, finding a suitable location

is not only difficult, but expensive. Second, there is the timing of locating a speaker and providing accommodations for that speaker. We need someone who is a good presenter, who has just returned from an interesting palm collecting location or a palm expert who has perhaps just completed a treatise on palms. This is “seat of the pants” luck at best. Third, our Annual Banquet is in January. Many board members feel January is a bad month to hold an Annual Banquet. Therefore, there is substantial discussion about changing the date of the Annual Banquet from January to August. The idea is to add August to our schedule because we don’t currently have a meeting in August. Plus, August is our best month to have a Palm Society meeting. Fourth, there is discussion about eliminating our January meeting altogether and not having a meeting until March. Fifth, there is the camp that questions “Why have an Annual Banquet at all?” Some board members point out that many Palm Society members with significant palm collections and regular meeting attendance will sometimes drive over one hundred miles to attend a regular meeting. But those same members will skip the Annual Banquet even though it might be in their own neighborhood. Times are changing and for the past ten or more years, the Southern California Palm Society has been hosting Palm Society meetings at outstanding, private, Southern California palm gardens. To this end we have succeeded brilliantly and become perhaps the world’s premier plant and garden society. Ergo the expression, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it. This begets the notion that what draws our Palm Society members together is the opportunity to physically tour great Southern California palm collections, along with the camaraderie to do so with fellow palm enthusiasts.



## Taj Mahal

One of the few palms from India that grows in Southern California, the Taj Mahal "*Bentinckia condapanna*" has become quite popular



Teddy Bear  
The ever popular  
Teddy Bear "*Dypsis  
leptocheilos*"

This makes holding an annual banquet in the dead of winter (when it's often raining) with an outstanding speaker (if we can find an outstanding speaker) at an affordable place (if we can find an affordable place) and forgo our unquenchable thirst to see yet another of the many great private, Southern California palm collections that our members have successfully developed over the years a tough sell. I have just one board vote on this issue. But guess how I'm going to cast it.

Questions, comments, suggestion, other business or nonbusiness related matters, contact Don Tollefson, editor, Southern California Palm Society e-newsletter. [dontol@verizon.net](mailto:dontol@verizon.net).