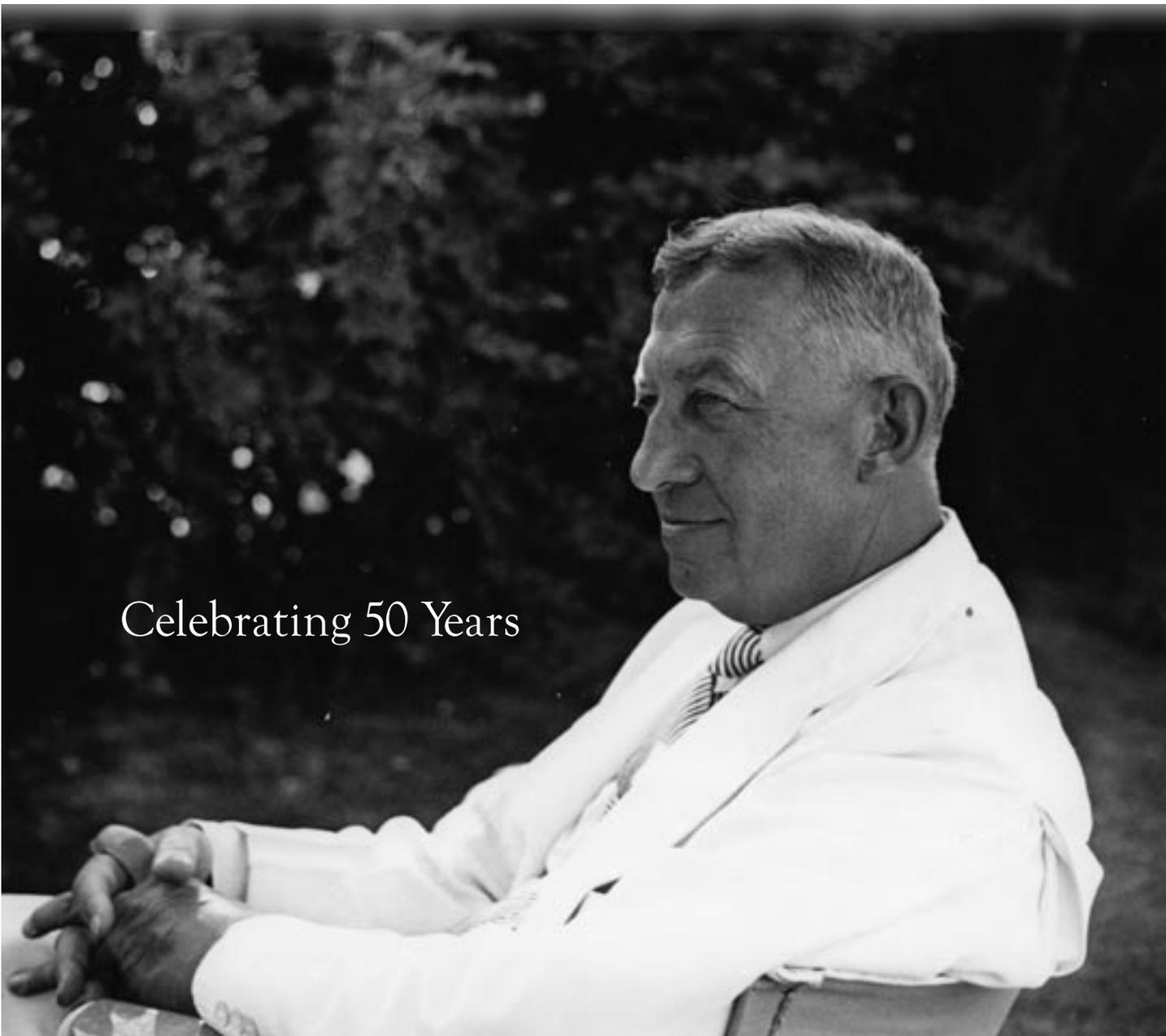




MONTGOMERY BOTANICAL CENTER 50TH ANNIVERSARY: 1959-2009



Celebrating 50 Years

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Established 1959

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To advance science, education, conservation and horticultural knowledge of tropical plants, emphasizing palms and cycads, Montgomery Botanical Center collects seeds from wild plant populations around the world and grows the resulting plants in population-based, documented, scientific collections, for use by botanists, scientists, and educators, in a 120-acre botanical garden exemplifying excellent design.

Montgomery Botanical Center (originally The Montgomery Foundation) is a tax-exempt, nonprofit institution established by Nell Montgomery Jennings in memory of her husband, Colonel Robert H. Montgomery, and his love of palms and cycads.

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11901 Old Cutler Road  
Miami, Florida 33156  
Phone 305.667.3800  
Fax 305.661.5984

mbc@montgomerybotanical.org  
www.montgomerybotanical.org

Masthead photo of Montgomery Palm  
(*Veitchia arecina*)  
by Harvey Bernstein

Printed on recycled paper

F r o m t h e  
**Executive Director**



On the facing page, Jared captures Nell's wishes fifty years ago as she incorporated The Montgomery Foundation, now Montgomery Botanical Center.

Assuredly, Nell and The Colonel would be very pleased at our record since 1959. Montgomery Botanical Center has developed, conserved and advanced an internationally-accredited collection of cycads and palms, furthered botanical science in numerous ways, and enhanced the education of generations of plant scientists.

The articles in this newsletter exemplify and illustrate how the work of our team fulfills our mission: Larry discusses his palm studies; Laurie, John, and Felix each offer descriptions of the palms for which we care and the care our palms require; Chad recounts his work in New Caledonia, and I offer a narrative of cycad fieldwork in Belize. Our acknowledgements grew longer in 2008, demonstrating our growing network of supporters and supported (see pages 9 and 10).

To place our 50th anniversary year in the broader context, Montgomery's achievement is among exceptional company; around the world, the botanical community celebrates milestones this year. Two world-renowned institutions — Missouri Botanical Garden and Singapore Botanic Gardens — are both 150. And, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew is now celebrating its 250th year!

This context speaks well for our future. One or two hundred years from now, our successors will highlight an even greater record than we have thus far written. But in the closer term, I discuss our plans over the next five years on page 5.

Please join me in celebrating this wonderful milestone by remembering our past, celebrating our present, and moving ahead into a bright future. I look forward to seeing all of you here soon.

Pictured: Dr. Griffith with *Zamia prasina* (see page 4) in Belize.

## NELL'S VISION

Eleanor Elizabeth Foster Montgomery Jennings had a dream which she felt so strongly about that she knew if it were to come true she had to do it herself — It could not be postponed for posterity by putting it in her will for someone else to do. Nell shared these feelings in a manuscript she wrote in 1980, named: *The Montgomery Foundation: A Memoir*.

After Robert Montgomery's death in 1953 and her marriage to Alvin Jennings in 1956 she struggled with what she should do with the Palmetum. Her options were to sell it, keep it, or to leave it in her will to someone else, but whom. She drew on her past experience and current friends to help her in making the best decision. Nell's main concern was to do something with the property that would honor the memory of her first husband.

Two developments in 1959 informed Nell as to what the best future for the Palmetum should hold. Both events had to do with securing the future of the Fairchild Tropical Garden. These developments were a commitment to build research programs, and to hire plant scientists. With those commitments in place, Nell felt Fairchild Tropical Garden had the boost it needed to become the outstanding institution that it is today.

These events led to November 20, 1959, when the Certificate of Incorporation papers were signed forming The Montgomery Foundation, Inc. Those signing were: Eleanor F. Jennings, Arthur Montgomery, Charlotte M. Schluter, W. Arthur Campbell, and Alvin R. Jennings. Nell stated that, "Creation of The Montgomery Foundation seemed to give me the answer to the question that had been on my mind for several years: how to preserve the Palmetum, make it useful to the Fairchild Garden, and at the same time preserve the identity of Robert H. Montgomery." Nell saw how FTG's 1959 commitments to science could be advanced through strategic partnership with The Montgomery Foundation.

Through discussions with Arthur Campbell she determined the particular purposes for which The Montgomery Foundation was formed. Some of those are as follows:

**To** carry out activities having scientific or educational purposes in the field of tropical botany and horticulture;

**To** provide fellowships and scholarships in the fields of tropical botany and horticulture;

**To** provide funds for expeditions; research projects or similar activities for the promotion of knowledge of tropical botany and horticulture.



Nell Montgomery at the front door of her home at the Coconut Grove Palmetum

Continuing Nell's vision, the MBC mission is now stated as, "to advance science, education, conservation, and horticultural knowledge of tropical plants, emphasizing palms and cycads, and to exemplify excellent botanical garden design." A primary MBC objective is making the Montgomery name known and respected in the field of plant science.

In 1987, Nell made the following comment: "It is wonderful to have a dream and then the great satisfaction of seeing it materialize. That is what happened to Robert H. Montgomery." Her comment was a reflection on the Colonel, his work collecting palms and cycads for the Palmetum, and the wide interest they generated.

Out of this work, and the work of his close friend Dr. David Fairchild, a botanical tradition was established in Miami. From that friendship, the Colonel decided that Miami should have a tropical garden where these plants could be displayed to the public. Thus, the Fairchild Tropical Garden became reality. Nell drew on these experiences and the examples that her late husband had set to realize her own dream when she founded The Montgomery Foundation and was able to watch it grow.

Would Nell Montgomery be pleased with what has been accomplished? I think so.

*Jared Fogg, Archivist*  
[archive@montgomerybotanical.org](mailto:archive@montgomerybotanical.org)

# SINKHOLE CYCADS OF BELIZE: HELPING A CRITICALLY ENDANGERED *ZAMIA*

Before 2008, MBC had only seven *Zamia prasina* plants, from fieldwork by John Janovec and Amanda Neill in Belize eight years ago. Those seven plants are significant, as conservationists believed fewer than 100 plants remained in the wild as of 2003.

Reports by Janovec and Neill were intriguing. They depicted plants growing at the dark bottom of deep sinkholes, on limestone and guano — and without any other plants! Besides those reports, very little was known, so we decided to study this *Zamia* firsthand.

John Janovec put Michael and I in touch with his colleague, Valentino Tzub. Valentino knew two remote sinkholes with *Zamia*; we planned to visit both.

## THE FIRST SINKHOLE

Jan Meerman, a well-known Belizean ecologist, joined us for the first trip. Valentino led us through farmland, into jungle



*Zamia prasina* growing in a remote sinkhole — a very specialized habitat.

foliage, and up into the deeply shaded Maya Mountains. After the morning, the ground opened before us, a limestone bowl reaching down two hundred feet, with no break in the canopy. Valentino guided us down a steep incline, a rock climb, and a short slide down a rotting trunk.

At the bottom, we were thrilled to count over 100 *Zamia prasina* against the wall of the cavity. The day was spent measuring plants, collecting seed and specimens, and taking photographs.

Early afternoon, a huge thunderstorm soaked the mountain, but the *Zamia* (and we) stayed completely dry. We learned something special about the plants: these cycads only grew under the dripline of the rock, where the soil remained completely dry. We spent the available sunlight gathering data. Late that day, we climbed out, and returned to town.

A detailed account of our *Zamia prasina* conservation efforts is online:  
[www.montgomerybotanical.org](http://www.montgomerybotanical.org)

We thank the Belize Forest Department for permission, and the Association of Zoological Horticulture for funding this work.

## A MORE REMOTE SINKHOLE

Geoff Hoesse, a naturalist and caver, joined us for the more distant sinkhole. Getting there required a packhorse and a day's walk to camp. A trek along logging roads and jungle paths took us higher into the mountains. Arriving at an old timber camp, after a hot meal and jokes around the fire, we slept.

The next morning, Valentino led us into deeper shade to the second sinkhole. One side gently sloped down, opening into a large, steep-sided open cavity. Here we found more *Zamia* — around 140 mature plants with numerous seedlings. We worked steadily from one end to the other to measure, survey, photograph, and collect seeds from these rare cycads.

Our ambitious workload passed the day quickly, and quite late we climbed back into the forest, hiked to camp, and settled into a solid sleep. At dawn, we hiked back to town, and were honored to enjoy a meal with Valentino and his family before parting ways.



Valentino Tzub, Michael Calonje, and Geoff Hoesse with *Zamia prasina*.

## CONSERVATION ACTION

There were many seedlings in the more remote sinkhole, but the first had none; all plants appeared mature. This observation conforms to reports of commercial seed harvest. Years of harvesting weakens the population. Another concern is the specialized nature of the habitat: appropriate sinkhole space must be limited.

We are glad to report more surviving *Zamia prasina* than previously thought — two populations of over 100 mature plants, and some other smaller populations on hill tops. Our work placed conservation collections of *Zamia prasina* into protective cultivation at Belize Botanic Garden, Green Hills Botanical Collections, and MBC. Research is underway on these collections.

*M. Patrick Griffith, Ph.D., Executive Director*  
[patrick@montgomerybotanical.org](mailto:patrick@montgomerybotanical.org)

*Michael Calonje, Cycad Biologist*  
[michaelc@montgomerybotanical.org](mailto:michaelc@montgomerybotanical.org)



## COPERNICIA BAILEYANA AT MONTGOMERY BOTANICAL CENTER

To describe this palm as majestic or stately hardly does it justice, as the sight of a mature Bailey Palm is posi-



Trio of Bailey Palms bowed but not broken by a previous hurricane

tively arresting. Most of our palm species could be described as graceful, their fronds moving in response to the slightest breeze, but not so the Bailey Palm. It stands stiff and unyielding even in the

face of hurricane force winds. *Copernicia baileyana* has a massive whitish trunk which looks like fresh concrete, and can exceed 60 feet in its natural habitat. Its crowning glory is the densely crowded head of ridged leaves which, when viewed from below, produce the effect of a halo.

Native to dry forests and savannas of eastern and central Cuba, it nonetheless appreciates moist, well drained soil and can survive brief periods of inundation. Considered to be moderately salt tolerant, our most impressive specimens grow within 10 meters of brackish lakes which rise and fall in response to the tides. Indeed, this area of the garden has been completely flooded with sea water from hurricane surge on more than one occasion during the life of these palms.

This trait would seem to make *Copernicia baileyana* an ideal candidate for further planting in South Florida, and

it would likely compete with the Royal Palm as a choice for avenue plantings, were it not for its slow rate of growth.



Crown of *Copernicia baileyana* from below

Nevertheless, it has been underutilized in the landscape and should be planted wherever there is sufficient space.

*John Harshaw, Assistant Curator  
johnh@montgomerybotanical.org*

## NEW CALEDONIA: PALMS AND RELIC CONIFERS

In the Pacific east of Australia and northwest of New Zealand, New Caledonia is a biotic island as much as a physical island, comprising a very unique relic flora of the ancient southern Continent Gondwana. It is a wonderland of stunningly beautiful palms, unique conifers, and a host of other unusual plants. The survival of much of this flora is related to its ability to adapt to the difficult soils that dominate the southern part of the island. These soils are high in metals such as magnesium, nickel and chromium, but extremely low in calcium and phosphorus.

In 2000, MBC Palm Biologist Dr. Larry Noblick visited the island to collect palms and the cycad, *Cycas seemanii*, that grow there. The lovely *Chambeyronia macrocarpa* palms he collected have become quite an attractive part of the MBC landscape. Through MBC's ongoing partnership with the Atlanta Botanical Garden (ABG), we



Night botany beside Lac en Huit, *Retrophyllum minus*

later added a number of very rare and interesting New Caledonian conifers to our collections in 2007 and 2008, many of which have adapted well to our growing conditions.

In late 2008, Ron Determann, Conservatory Director of ABG, and I were invited to present our experiences cultivating New Caledonian plants at a special colloquium on aromatic, medicinal and ornamental plants. I contributed an overview of New Caledonian plants conserved in North American Botanic Gardens. With support from MBC and ABG, we attended the conference and studied the island's flora. During these studies we made key connections with botanists, conservationists and native plant nurseries, to advance conservation of these amazing relics.

*Chad E. Husby, Collections Manager  
chad@montgomerybotanical.org*

## LAND FROM SEA

Although scientific plant collections are the keystone of the MBC mission, the varied natural resources at the Center offer a wide arc of research, conservation and educational opportunities. Marine biologists from the state Department of Environmental Protection have researched the MBC lake system as potential manatee rehabilitation habitat, ichthyologists from the Atlantic Gamefish Foundation have tracked the migratory patterns of Redfish (*Sciaenops ocellatus*) through the lake and ditches, and geophysicists from the University of Miami have used the unique and secure environs of MBC to develop prototype exploratory equipment before deploying to less-forgiving offshore venues. Finally, geology classes from the University of Miami and Florida International University have found that the undisturbed outcrops of the Atlantic Coastal Ridge seen at MBC are ideal for studying features typical of



Sinkhole geology with students

karst formations encountered at locations worldwide.

I had the opportunity recently to trek along with a group of geology graduate students from FIU, as Drs. Rene Price and Grenville Draper explained some of the features of the escarpment.

Although the wave cut bluffs below the Nixon Smiley Building and the mysterious solution pipes to the west are quite dramatic, it is the *doline*, a closed depression that drains into the water table, with the unique *karren* (limestone pinnacles) nestled in the southeast corner of the CGP and used as a micro-habitat for various species of *Zamia* that seems to draw the interest and speculation of just about every visitor to the center, geologists and botanists, scientists and laymen alike.

It is somewhat amazing that some of the species thriving in the MBC plant collections date back millions of years to the Mesozoic era, whereas just as recently as the Pleistocene this same nurturing habitat was under 30 feet of ocean. Truly, as JE Hoffmeister puts it in his classic text on the geology of South Florida, MBC is “land from the sea.”

*Lee Anderson, Superintendent  
land@montgomerybotanical.org*

## HOPE FOR *ATTALEA CRASSISPATHA*

In the summer of 1991, MBC was fortunate to receive wild collected seed of *Attalea crassipatha*, a rare palm which is considered to be critically endangered in its homeland of Haiti. Fewer than thirty individual palms are thought to remain in the wild, leading this palm to be described as one of the rarest palms in the Americas.

*Attalea crassipatha* holds additional scientific interest for botanists because of its unusual geographic distribution. It is found only in the Caribbean, on the southwestern peninsula of Haiti. All other species of *Attalea* are found in Central and South America, making *Attalea crassipatha* an isolated member of its genus.

For MBC, acquisitions such as *Attalea crassipatha* highlight our efforts in the area of conservation: as Palm Curator, I was thrilled to have such an important palm become part



*Attalea crassipatha*, a critically endangered palm species of Haiti

of MBC's palm collection. In 1997, after being nurtured in our nursery for six years, ten young *Attalea crassipatha* palms were planted in the Palm Walk on MBC grounds. This collection is one of only a few to be successfully grown outside of its habitat in botanical gardens, and could in fact be one of the largest *ex situ* collections of this species in the world.

To date, the collection of *Attalea crassipatha* at MBC continues to thrive. In November 2008, eleven years after its planting, one of these palms became reproductively mature and initiated its first inflorescence. In January 2009, a second inflorescence emerged. Hopefully, viable seed will soon be produced by our Caribbean treasures, providing MBC with the resources to perhaps re-establish faltering populations in the wild and further support the expansion of collections outside of Haiti.

*Laurie Danielson, Palm Curator  
lauried@montgomerybotanical.org*

# PALM IDENTIFICATION: IT'S WHAT'S INSIDE THAT COUNTS



*Butia archeri*



*Butia x Jubaea* hybrid



*Jubaea chilensis*

Identifying palms is difficult without flowers or fruits. In fact, many *Syagrus* species are impossible to distinguish without them. Therefore, young specimens can be problematic. Lately, I have been experimenting with using palm leaflet anatomy as an alternative method of identification.

A double-sided razor blade and one side of a middle palm leaflet are all the materials needed. By folding the leaflet lengthwise on itself a few times, bracing the folded leaflet accordion on a stiff piece of cardboard, I am able to hand slice a few good cross-sections and float them into a watch glass or onto a glass slide. A dissecting scope separates the good sections from the rest of the “palm salad” and a 100x microscope is sufficient to examine the anatomy. Digital photography has

enabled me to build a reference collection of these leaflet sections for easy comparison of the species and the genera.

There is enough anatomical variation in *Syagrus* leaflets to make this method extremely useful. It has helped to identify *Syagrus* species that have been erroneously lumped together into a single species (i.e. species in the *S. petraea* complex).

Last December, Richard Moyroud showed me a young palm that he thought might be *Jubaea chilensis*, the Chilean Wine Palm. The palm had the physical characters of a young *Jubaea*. After comparing the leaflet sections, it became obvious that his *Jubaea* was hybridized with *Butia*. Hand sectioning is quick and inexpensive, but in order to get a good leaflet section one must be prepared to make a lot of “palm salad”.

Larry Noblick, Ph.D., Palm Biologist  
larryn@montgomerybotanical.org

## PALM PREPARATION FOR COLD FRONTS AT MBC

Upon news of a cold front heading towards South Florida, MBC's palm team jumps into action to prepare. The first thing we do is confirm that the predicted temperature may damage our palms. This January, we had an overnight low of 37° F, the lowest in many years.

Special attention must be given to plants from tropical regions such as *Thrinax ekmaniana* collected from Cuba. These palms are critically endangered in the wild and valuable to research at MBC (see photo).

*Thrinax ekmaniana*'s lack of low temperature tolerance makes this palm extremely vulnerable during cold snaps. Palms such as these are a priority in times of cold, as they can quickly succumb to frost.



*Thrinax ekmaniana* wrapped in burlap

The first thing we do is to ensure the plants have received adequate water (if appropriate) and that they are properly shielded from the cold. In this case we placed two layers of burlap over the palms and then wrapped the palms with straps.

We avoid using plastic, since it does not provide sufficient insulation from the cold and may further increase the burning of the fronds due to condensation.

The most common symptom of cold damage is burning and discoloration of the palm fronds. We rarely lose palms during short cold snaps if properly protected, but prolonged cold weather increases this risk.

Felix Beruwides, Assistant Curator  
felixb@montgomerybotanical.org

### Montgomery Botanical Center and International Collaboration

The Board of Directors of MBC have unanimously adopted the MBC International Fieldwork and Collaboration Policy.

For decades, MBC has conducted international research and conservation fieldwork in an ethical and collaborative manner. The breadth of colleagues on the facing page illustrates this commitment. MBC has also been a leading institution in requiring rigorous permitting for plant material added to the scientific collections.

The policy document can be viewed on the MBC website: [www.montgomerybotanical.org](http://www.montgomerybotanical.org)

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Bob Hutchinson  
Marilyn Johnson  
Vivian Jordan  
David Manz  
Margaret Martin  
Gwen Myres  
Daniela Noblick  
Alfredo Perez  
Cliff Renshaw  
Merilynn Renshaw

Bernard Scherban  
Cynthia Shore  
Karl Smiley, M.D.  
Cristina Strader  
Victoria Strader  
Kirsten Tigler  
Erica Torres  
Penelope Twining  
Chris Tyson  
Brian Witcher  
Evelyn Young

### DONATIONS

Hamann, Gregg & Debra  
Harris, Thomas M  
Haynes, Marion D.  
Haynes, Walter  
Hemmes, Don E.  
Hibbard, Joe  
Hibnick, Charles  
Hicks, Patricia  
Holley, Brian E.  
Holton, Dale F.  
Johnson, Beverley  
Johnson, Bob & Catherine  
Keller, Kathleen & Karl  
Kelly, Eileen & Loyd  
Kelly, L. Patrick  
Kelly, Nicholas & Barbara  
Leaser, David  
Lynch, Susan E.  
Manz David & Sally  
Manz, Peter A. & Jean  
McNaughton, Robert  
Miami Beach Botanical  
Garden  
Moore, Randal & Cindy  
Noblick, Florence  
Nutt, Carol Horvitz & Randy  
Olwell, Brian & Therese  
P.E.O. Chapter K

Petrine, Louise  
Priegues, Lazaro  
Reyes, Armando  
Robinson, Nettie Belle  
Sacher, Charles P. and  
Dorothy  
Sacher, Charles S. & Ana  
Sacher, Richard &  
Annamaria  
Schokman, Colleen &  
Larry  
Schubert, David  
Smiley, Karl & Charlotte  
Solomon, Cheryl  
Sparkman, George and  
Gisela  
Tabak, Jeremy  
Talbot, Linda  
Thorne, Robert  
Uhl, Natalie  
Van De Water, Thomas &  
Jeanette  
Vartanian, Christabel &  
Paul  
Wallace, Milton J.  
Ware, Catherine  
White, Paton  
Young, Evelyn

Montgomery Botanical Center apologizes for any omissions or errors in accuracy.

Want to volunteer at Montgomery?  
Call (305) 667-3800, extension 114 or email [tracym@montgomerybotanical.org](mailto:tracym@montgomerybotanical.org)

## MBC TEAM NEWS

**Claudia Calonje** has been assigned the position of Collections Specialist. Claudia has been with Montgomery Botanical Center since 2007. She began as a volunteer and is now working in Collections. Her biology and botany degrees from the Universidad del Valle in Cali, Colombia provide a solid background for her work here at Montgomery Botanical Center.

**Montgomery Botanical Center** hosted the 2008 Volunteer Appreciation Lunch in the Nixon Smiley Building. It was well attended by volunteers and staff. Volunteers donate thousands of hours a year to MBC; we thank them!



## THE VILLAGERS SUPPORT MONTGOMERY

The Villagers have been generous supporters of Montgomery Botanical Center, granting funds for restoration work on Nell's House and the Arthur Montgomery Guesthouse.

This year's restoration grant will fund much needed wall restoration in the Arthur Montgomery Guesthouse. The guesthouse has been serving its purpose to house visiting scientists for almost 75 years (since 1935). Various notable guests, such as David Fairchild and Dwight D. Eisenhower, used the Arthur Montgomery Guesthouse while visiting the Montgomerys.

The Villagers' grant advances the MBC mission of supporting research, education, and conservation through the restoration of the guesthouse. Visiting researchers from overseas are routinely hosted here, from distant places such as Australia, Russia, or Colombia, as they study MBC's living plant collections.

The Villagers highlight MBC in their second cookbook titled, *Cook It Like A Native!* MBC is showcased on pages 134, 136, and 156. The proceeds from the cookbook fund future projects supported by The Villagers.

The Villagers have also supported the restoration of David Fairchild's Study at The Kampong and the Gatehouse at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden.

We thank the Villagers for their continued support in helping us preserve and restore these two buildings while they continue to serve the vital mission and operations of MBC.

*Tracy Magellan, Funding & Communications*  
[tracym@montgomerybotanical.org](mailto:tracym@montgomerybotanical.org)

## A GROWING NUMBER OF PLANTS

MBC's growing collection includes palms, cycads, tropical conifers, and dicots. The entire collection is inventoried at the end of each year by the Collections Development Department, a process that can take several weeks to complete due to the size of the collection, which now includes 10,818 mapped and labeled plants in the ground, and 14,468 in the nursery.

The inventory process involves tallying all existing plants in the collection. Since every plant must be observed individually, it provides an opportunity to evaluate the health of individual plants, identify the sex of cycads that may have coned for the first time, and identify any other issues such as the need for replacing labels.

The completed inventory, stored in our database (BG-BASE), provides a list of plants and associated horticultural and phenological data that visiting researchers and students utilizing MBC's collection are able to access.

It also provides a snapshot of the size and diversity of MBC's collection. The statistics obtained from the yearly inventory can be used to compare with the inventories done in other years to determine the growth and diversity of the collection. Numbers of taxa and accessions trend upwards over the years, but hurricane years sometimes reduce these numbers.

The inventory process is critical to fulfilling MBC's mission goals of advancing science, education, conservation, and horticultural knowledge of tropical plants.

*Claudia Calonje, Collections Specialist*  
[claudiac@montgomerybotanical.org](mailto:claudiac@montgomerybotanical.org)

### MONTGOMERY BOTANICAL CENTER 2008 COLLECTION INVENTORY

	Palms	Cycads	Other
Total Taxa	429	257	556
in ground	356	227	457
in nursery	149	129	136
Total Accessions	2,273	1,959	2,245
in ground	1,805	1,282	2,046
in nursery	515	761	200
Total Plants	13,150	9,345	2,791
in ground	5,222	3,191	2,405
in nursery	7,928	6,154	386

"Other" includes tropical conifers and tropical flowering trees.

In this inventory, taxa counts are of species, subspecies, and varieties.

An accession is a collection of seeds from one source or locality.

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## FROM THE MONTGOMERY ARCHIVE

Though Montgomery Botanical Center is 50 years old this year, our history runs deeper. Prior to the establishment of The Montgomery Foundation, Robert and Nell Montgomery founded Fairchild Tropical Garden in 1938. They held numerous, lavish parties to benefit Fairchild and also donated the original trolley, the “Fairchild Rambler,” used at the Ramble.

Many of the pictures we use from the Montgomery Archive date back before 1959. Miami’s Botanical Heritage is rooted in the lives of the Montgomeries and the institutions they gave us, Montgomery Botanical Center and Fairchild Tropical Garden.

This photo was taken from a Christmas Card sent out by Robert and Nell Montgomery (pictured) in 1950.



COME TAKE A RIDE WITH US THROUGH THE FAIRCHILD GARDEN!