

Zamia lucayana: A living treasure from The Bahamas

A recent project worked to study and conserve the Endangered Bahamian cycad, *Zamia lucayana* (see our Spring 2010 Newsletter). The project brought together experts from The Bahamas National Trust (BNT), Florida International University (FIU), Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden (FTBG), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Montgomery Botanical Center (MBC), in a highly successful collaboration. This cycad is only known from one small area on Long Island in The Bahamas. Herbarium specimens, seeds, geographic data and DNA samples were collected from *Z. lucayana* and its relatives throughout The Bahamas, with the support of the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund.

As part of the project, public seminars were presented at the Retreat Garden National Park in Nassau and at the Community Center on Long Island. Javier Francisco-Ortega (FIU/FTBG) spoke about tropical botany and education, Tracy Magellan (MBC) spoke about *ex situ* conservation, Michael Calonje



Revisiting the plant pictured on the *Zamia lucayana* outreach postcard



Javier, Lindy and Michael in *Zamia* habitat

(MBC) presented our findings about Bahamian cycads and *Zamia lucayana*, and Lindy Knowles presented an overview of The Bahamas National Trust.

The audiences were highly engaged and interested to learn the local *Zamia*, known as “Bay Rush,” was a globally rare species. Informational posters and postcards were distributed to environmental and government agencies, to the Long Island Museum, and to several schools.

The team returned to the *Zamia lucayana* habitat studied one and a half years ago, and were pleased to find the

habitat and plants remain intact. Some of the land may change ownership in the near future—thus, the broad outreach from this project can help inform important future stewards of this living treasure.

The *Zamia lucayana* project was highly successful, bringing together all the components of Montgomery Botanical Center’s mission of supporting research, conservation, and education.

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Public Meeting at the Retreat Garden National Park, Nassau