



Over the last year, botanists from Montgomery worked to bring new *Sabal* species into cultivation. Montgomery has a leading living collection of *Sabal*, an important resource for research and conservation. Including our beloved native *S. palmetto* and the elusive *S. miamiensis*, the genus has up to 16 species, and 14 of these are grown at Montgomery – including two Florida State Champions, *S. uresana* and *S. yapa*.

A Giant Dominican Palmetto

For recent plant exploration fieldwork in the Dominican Republic, Dr. Chad Husby of Montgomery teamed up with Dr. Brett Jestrow and Jason Lopez of Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden (FTBG) at the invitation of Ricardo Garcia, Director General of Jardín Botánico Nacional Dr. Rafael Ma. Moscoso de Santo Domingo (JBSD). Francisco Jiménez Rodríguez and Alberto Veloz of the JBSD coordinated the visit. Expert botanist Teodoro Clase of JBSD accompanied the team in the field. The project built upon longstanding collaboration among the three botanic gardens. Dr. Lin Lougheed generously provided funding for this field project.

The team focused on palms and other ornamentally and scientifically important plants to introduce to the botanical collections of South Florida. Over 100 species were collected, including *Reinhardtia paiewonskiana*, from the Sierra de Bahoruco. It is the only *Reinhardtia* palm species in the Caribbean and a new genus for MBC and FTBG. Two mountain conifers were also collected, *Podocarpus aristulatus* and *Juniperus ekmanii*.

The team's main goal was to evaluate and collect *Sabal domingensis*, perhaps the largest *Sabal* species, from along the northern Caribbean coast. For many years, a large planting of Dominican sabals at Montgomery were considered *S. domingensis*, but Palm Biologist Larry Noblick recently determined these were misidentified *S. causiarum*.

The team found a large *S. domingensis* population scattered along hillsides and pastures in a dry forest along the north coast. Because of an unusually dry summer most of the palms had no seed. After much searching, mature fruits were found on a robust specimen (see cover).

The JBSD collections were also enriched from the collaboration, with plants from Montgomery, specimens from FTBG, and new material from the fieldwork. The remarkable plants and the extensive collaborations hearken back to the early botanical collaboration in South Florida. Colonel Robert Montgomery, Dr. David Fairchild, and Dr. Rafael Ma. Moscoso would undoubtedly have been very pleased with the outcome.

The Newest Palmetto

Recently, Dr. Doug Goldman of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) discovered that the tall palms in Brazoria County, Texas were actually a new hybrid species, *Sabal* × *brazoriensis* (see the Spring 2012 Newsletter). Since this *Sabal* was not yet in our collection, bringing this new palmetto to Montgomery was an important goal! Dr. Patrick Griffith teamed up with Doug, Mr. Thomas Adams of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Colonel Michael Griffith (Patrick's Dad) to study and collect specimens of this unique palm.

Perhaps only a few hundred Brazoria Palms survive in the wild (see photo on page 2). Fortunately, they thrive in a forest which was recently protected as part of the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge. The team collected seeds, specimens and photographs, to help conserve and document this very rare natural hybrid species.

Patrick is grateful to Doug and Thomas for their time, knowledge and expertise, the Paul Drummond Fund for Palm Conservation for funding this fieldwork, the USFWS for permission to collect and to Mike and Sylvia Griffith for hospitality and support.