



Issue 2, Volume 1

April 2021

LAST [PRE-QUARANTINE] MEETING:	Monday, February 24, 2020 at 7:00 pm
SPEAKER:	Georgia Tasker
TOPIC:	Botanical Gardens visited in her travels from Iceland to Myanmar
Raffle Table:	Oasis Nursery [Rebecca & Duanne Tannenbaum] and Rory Antolak

Meeting – Monday April 26th, 2021

Yes! We are having an “in-person” meeting at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Gardens in the Garden House!

We realize it’s been over a year since our last meeting and to many of us our lives have changed drastically. We all hope to get back to some type of norm; starting with an in-person meeting hopefully will get us started.

DATE: Monday, April 26, 2021 at 7:15 pm in the GARDEN HOUSE

Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, 10901 Old Cutler Road, Coral Gables

TREASURY REPORT: \$15,738.54

RAFFLE TABLE PRESENTED BY: All Meeting Attendees Please Bring a Plant for the Raffle *

HOSPITALITY TABLE: No Refreshments Permitted at this time per Fairchild **

PROGRAM SPEAKERS: Chad Husby

TOPIC: Rare and Unusual Ficus and Clusias

Continued, next page

* **Raffle Table:**

After a discussion with Ralph, our raffle committee head, we decided that for this April meeting we would ask our members that plan to attend the meeting to donate one plant or a plant related item for the raffle table. We have done this before and we received an excellent assortment of items.

Below is the response from Nestor Ortiz of Fairchild to our request for an in-person meeting:

Hello ,

It has been a year since Fairchild has hosted Plant Society meetings and you ALL are dearly missed. Fairchild is happy to welcome the Plant Societies back for their monthly meeting starting on April 1, 2021. Here are some rules that will have to be followed to host your meetings at the Garden:

- **Everyone that attends needs to fill out an "Assumption of Risk and Release of Liability Form"** (Form Attached) **[If you are able (just to save time) please print, fill-out, and bring the Release with you to the meeting. There will however be forms available at the meeting]**
- **FTBG will have Forms for Plant Societies**
- **Plant Societies to provide pens**
- **Everyone needs to have their Temperature Checked and noted (Non-Contact Thermometer)** **[A non-contact thermometer will be available at the meeting]**
- **Each Plant Society is responsible for having their own Non-Contact Thermometer**
- **All meetings are being held in The Garden House**
- **** NO FOOD will be permitted during meetings**

Can you please send me what date/time you are having your meeting so we can make sure we are on the same page. Looking forward to having you all at the garden again. Have a wonderful day.

Nestor Ortiz

**Director of Hospitality Operations
Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden**

Dear Tropical Friends & Exotic People ,

As you are all acutely aware, we have not met in-person in over a year. I know you have missed our meetings and the time you were able to socialize with friends, so I know you are itching for things to return to normal (or closer to normal). I hope that you will all get vaccinated, so that when we do meet again we all feel safe and healthy. A couple weeks ago Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden sent an email inviting plant societies to begin holding in-person meetings again in April. That was too short-notice for us to find a speaker*, but the Board would like to begin holding meetings again as soon as possible. If you decide you would like to attend an in-person meeting at the Garden, please review the following rules:

- 1. Everyone that attends needs to fill out a "Assumption of Risk and Release of Liability form" (Form Attached)**
- 2. FTBG will have Forms for Plant Societies**
- 3. Plant Societies to provide pens**
- 4. Everyone needs to have their Temperature Checked and noted (Non-Contact Thermometer)**
- 5. Each Plant Society is responsible for having their own Non-Contact Thermometer**
- 6. All meeting are being held in The Garden House**
- 7. NO FOOD will be permitted during Meetings**

Our meetings are typically at dinner time, or on your commute from work, so I know many of you rely on food and beverages being provided. Emaly has done an amazing job keeping us sated over the years. If you attend a meeting please keep in mind that you will not be able to remove your mask to eat during the meeting, so please eat ahead of time.

It has been a pleasure being president of this society, but it is with regret that I will be stepping down. This year I have been growing my own business as a horticulturist, landscaper, and landscape designer, as well as regular volunteer work. I'm working long hours every day of the week, and unfortunately, I can no longer fulfill the role as president of this society. I have informed the Board that I will remain in the position until a new president of TFEPS can be elected. If you are able and willing, please consider nominating yourself (or asking to be nominated.) If you would like to be president, but don't feel comfortable running a meeting or speaking in front of the group, please re-consider. In a conversation with Marnie, I said that I would be willing to serve as co-president and could continue being the spokesperson, but I have since realized that I don't know if I'll even be able to attend our meetings. I should note that the society needs a president and cannot continue without one, and that when Ellis agreed to be Vice President it was with the condition that he not become president. I hope that someone would like to step up.

Best,

Arielle J. Simon

*** Editor's Note: Chad Husby will be speaker for the April 26, 2021 meeting (Please see page 1)**

Assumption of Risk and Release of Liability

I fully and absolutely assume all risk of injury to myself, including, but not limited to death, and hereby unconditionally and absolutely release, even for their own negligence, indemnify and hold harmless Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden and its officers and directors, employees, agents, representatives, and its insurers, from all claims for damage or injuries of any kind sustained by me or my guests, now or in the future, arising from my rental and use of Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden facilities for the following event (wedding, meeting, party, or other special event):

COVID-19 Addendum

Renter, Guests, and Vendors acknowledge an inherent risk of exposure to Covid-19 exists in any public areas place where people are present. By renting and/or using Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, Renter, Guests, and Vendors agree to follow all applicable Federal, State and local regulations and recommendations, including but not limited to "social distancing" and the wearing of face masks as necessary. Renter, Guests, and Vendors voluntarily assume all risks related to exposure to Covid-19 and agree to release Fairchild, its officers and directors, employees, agents, and representatives from liability for any illness or injury. Renter, Guests, and Vendors further understand and agree that this release includes any claims based on actions, omissions, or negligence of Fairchild, its employees, board of directors, and representatives, whether a COVID-19 infection occurs before, during, or after the event. Moreover, Renter, Guests, and Vendors agree to indemnify Fairchild against all third-party claims related to Covid-19 that may be brought against Fairchild related to Renter's event, including but not limited to any fines or other claims related to any alleged violation of federal, state and local regulations.

Name of Event: _____ **Date(s):** _____

I have read this Assumption of Risk and Release of Liability and understand that it is an absolute release and I execute the same freely and voluntarily and accept and agree to its terms and conditions.

Executed this _____ day of _____

____ Renter ____ Guest ____ Vendor

Signature

Print Name

On behalf of (Name of Company)

Address

Phone Number

Email

WITNESS

Signature

Temperature _____

Name of person taking temperature (Print)

Signature

Covid Policies and Procedures for a Safe and Enjoyable Experience

We are following all recommended policies issued by Miami-Dade County, the Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to ensure the health and safety of our guests, staff and volunteers.

Please be aware that Miami-Dade County has implemented a “no warning” policy: any guest deemed not to be complying with all stated policies will be politely escorted to the nearest exit and asked to leave Fairchild.

Please make yourself familiar with the following safety guidelines and policies

- Face coverings must be worn at all times, both indoors and outdoors, per Miami-Dade County. Exemptions for face coverings: children 2 years and younger and individuals with breathing difficulties.
- Individuals are not permitted to visit Fairchild if experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms or if they’ve been in contact with anyone who has COVID-19, as explained by the CDC’s health screening
- Individuals must follow the CDC’s recommendations to stop the spread of germs
- You must maintain the recommended social distance of 6 feet.
- You must sanitize your hands before entering the Garden, restrooms, the Shop, before exiting, etc.
- You will find sanitation stations throughout the Garden.
- If you need to pass other guests while on the path, please give sufficient social distance spacing.
- For your safety, water fountains/water stations are not available. We recommend bringing your own water.
- Gloves or face coverings must not be dropped on the grounds; there are trash receptacles where you can deposit any garbage.

Not Permitted

- Throwing garbage on the grounds
- Smoking
- Violating policies

These policies will help ensure your safety and the safety of the other visiting guests, staff and volunteers.

From the CDC: Understanding COVID-19 Symptoms

If you are experiencing any of the following symptoms as outlined by the CDC or have been in contact with anyone who has tested positive with COVID-19, you will not be permitted to visit the Garden.

People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. **Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus.** People with these symptoms or combinations of symptoms may have COVID-19:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- **Or at least two of these symptoms:**
- Fever
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat

Hello TFEPS Members,

As all of you know this past year has been devastating thanks to Covid-19.

A decision has been made regarding membership dues. Since we have not had any activities since March of 2020, if you paid your dues for 2020, they will be good through December 31, 2021. Those members that have not paid their 2020 dues (2019 members) and still wish to join/renew, please see the membership application within this bulletin.

As of now Fairchild still does not allow in-person meetings for the societies. As soon as that changes, yes, you will be informed. Hopefully with many of us getting the vaccine Fairchild may relax their position on in-person meetings.

Please stay well and be safe.

Hope to see you at the next meeting,
TFEPS Membership

NEW MEMBERS

Elizabeth Graham

Dan Keys

Matilda L Morabito

Ofelia Sorzano





Membership Application – 2020-2021

We offer 4 different memberships options:

Yearly dues are for calendar year – January - December

_____ \$ 15.00 for individual

_____ \$ 17.00 for two members at the same address

Lifetime:

_____ \$ 125.00 for individual

_____ \$ 150.00 for two members at the same address

This is for a New Membership: _____ or for Renewals: _____

Please Print

Name: _____

Phone: H or C: _____

E-mail: _____

Name: _____

Phone: H or C: _____

E-mail: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State: _____

Zip Code + 4: _____ + _____

H – Home Phone C – Cell Phone

Enclose check payable to: TFEPS

Please mail to: TFEPS – Membership

P.O. Box 902094

Homestead, Florida 33090-2094

- **In Loving Memory of John Banta**

With a heavy heart we are sad to announce the passing of John Banta, a great botanist, horticulturist, and scientist of the Florida tropical plant world. John left us on March 13, 2021, at age of 88. Until his last day he was full of energy, ideas, and dreams - how to make the plant world even better, and more enjoyable to all of us plant lovers.

John Banta was a phenomenal plantsman who has explored almost every continent in search of new and interesting plants. When he wasn't traveling the globe, he was hybridizing plants in his garden in Alva, Florida. Over the last decades John has brought into cultivation a number of plants from his travels and his own hybridizing program. His travels to Central and South America, as well as to Southeast Asia have produced such plants as *Kaempferia grande*, *Zingiber* sp. nov. Midnight, and even a plant named in his honor, *Calathea bantae*.



John Banta

Botanist, Scientist, and a Friend

John was our partner in TT Laboratories, which later had been evolved into the [Sunshine Boosters](#) project. He generated many amazing ideas on plant hormones, and how to make new interesting varieties. For example, some of his last projects were: creating seedless Raspberry, seedless Pomegranate, and variegated peppers (shown below.)



John has left for TopTropicals some rare collectable plants, books, shared his priceless knowledge and Love for Life. He will always stay in our hearts and in every plant whisper.



John Banta and John Mood with John's variegated peppers

- From the International Aroid Society -

... John was a firm believer that new plant introductions do not require worldly travels. Breeding plants in your own backyard can be most productive. One of many hybrids that may already be growing in your garden that John made many years ago is [Hedychium Golden Butterfly](#), the gold flowered butterfly ginger...

For John, the only thing more exciting than discovering a new plant is to convert a plant collector into a plant breeder. The joy of seeing new genetic combinations reveal their beauty in your hybrids is like hearing the great organ in Saint Paul's Cathedral...

This article, submitted by John Banta, is reprinted from the April and May 2001
TFEPS Newsletter

Elephant Ears

By John Banta

The real things are great flaps of skin which are of more use in regulating the elephant's body temperature than in hearing. When riding an elephant you tap the back of its ear with your foot to indicate a change in direction. A large piece of fried pastry, generally sold at carnivals, is also called an elephant's ear. The elephant ears of this article, naturally, plants. As is often the case in common names, a lot of plants have the common name "Elephant Ears". Several **Philodendrons**, a. **Caladium**, an **Alocasia**, several ferns, **Colocasias** and **Xanthosomas** share this name. In my mind, the **Xanthosomas** with their vast leaf areas are most deserving of the name, Elephant Ears.

Its botanical name comes from the yellow color found in the stems of several of the 60 species that make up this genus of neotropical aroids. It is one of the oldest food crops and that may explain why some of the edible ones have never been known to flower or fruit. ***Xanthosoma sagittaefolium*** is commonly seen growing in wet areas. Its great leaves look like huge elephant's ears. Many of the less common species merit the gardener's attention.

One of the most beautiful foliage plants is ***X. lindenii***. The tall pedatisect leaves of species like ***X. wendlandii*** and ***X. helleborifolium*** command attention in any garden. The rare and diminutive (5 inches) ***X. plowmanii*** with its fuzzy leaves marked with bold silver veins is a great pot plant. This is a genus which deserves the ardent attention that can only be given by a devoted amateur. If the rainforest is to survive it may be only in bits and pieces in the collections of devoted plant-nuts. ***X. taraotense*** is a huge plant. One leaf could hide a Volkswagen. This heavy feeder likes lots of water and about 50% sun. The leaves are pedatisect, which adds to its "look at me" quality. It remains one of those rare plants that collectors are always thrilled to obtain.

The "elephant ears" from Asia may not reach the size of the neotropical ***Xanthosomas*** but they are very important. The genus, ***Colocasia***, with about 8 species provides some outstanding horticultural plants like ***C. antiquorum***, ***C. "Black magic"***, and the ***C. affinis jenningsii*** varieties with their spectacular chartreuse and black patterns. However, it is the role as a food plant that makes the genus, ***Colocasia*** so very important. The production of coco-yams is an important food crop on most tropical countries. An interesting adventure you could easily take would be to include some coco-yams in one of your meals.

TFEPS 2020 SCHOLARSHIP NEWS

This year's scholarship recipients are Alyssa Kulberg and Christopher Sorich. Both are doctoral students.

Alyssa Kulberg is a second year graduate student in the University of Miami doctoral program in Biology. She is studying the ability of tropical trees to adapt and acclimate to rising temperatures. Her scholarship will help fund her study of street trees in Miami and how they are affected by hot temperatures.

Christopher Sorich is a first year PhD student at Florida International University investigating the unique chemistry of cycads, and how this chemistry may be adaptive to live in an extensive range of environmentally diverse habitats. He proposes to map the associations between cycad biflavonoids with environmental conditions and geography.

We wish them both great success in their respective studies and endeavors.

The Scholarship Committee

Martha Kent Leonard Goldstein Georgia Tasker

P.S. A well-deserved thank you to Bob Benaim for helping to keep pertinent documents up to date and delivering communications as is necessary

TFEPS 2021 Show & Sale

With all that is going on in the world with Covid-19 and at Fairchild, a decision was made to cancel this year's Show & Sale.

Hopefully 2022 will be a better year and we can plan for a show then.



Some Observations About Cycads

By Leonard Goldstein

If you are only passingly familiar with cycads, you're missing out on one of the most ancient and interesting representatives of the plant kingdom. The first cycads arose somewhere around 280 million years ago, but came into their own in the Jurassic Period, the same time in which dinosaurs reached their peak dominance, roughly 200 to 145 million years ago. But you can't say that's when cycads really flowered, because they're not flowering plants. Significantly more primitive than flowering plants, they reproduce by way of cones, some of which are very large and/or colorful.

Cycads are dioecious, that is, each is either male or female. In many species, when seeds reach full size, they still don't contain a fully-developed embryo. That requires a wait of several additional months. And, unlike what we are used to seeing in more modern plants, the flesh that covers the seed is not considered fruit, even though many animals eat it; it is known instead as sarcotesta. Although cycads contain a toxin known as cycasin, humans discovered that it is water-soluble and long ago learned to process the stems for food.

Cycad species at their zenith were more numerous and widespread than now. Their fossils have been identified on every continent, distributed from Antarctica to Siberia and Alaska. But as the earth chilled, cycads were squeezed closer to the equator. There is only one species native to the U.S.A. It is *Zamia integrifolia*.†

† For years there have been arguments about the species name. Even today there are high-level advocates for *Z. floridana* and *Z. pumila* instead of *Z. integrifolia*. Your author is in a peace-loving mood, and has chosen not to stumble into the crossfire among IFAS; the Florida Native Plant Society; and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

North American tribes found that its starchy subterranean stem, or caudex, could be rendered into a bread. Eventually the name coontie, derived from a Seminole term, koonte hatke (white bread or white root), was applied to this cycad by English speakers.

Nearly 200 years ago, settlers in the area that would become Ft. Lauderdale learned the technique for making coontie edible, and by 1845 a number of starch mills had sprung up in the future Broward and Dade counties, where large colonies of the cycad grew. Eventually the name Florida Arrowroot was applied to the coontie starch. During the early years in Miami, mills would take barrels of the plump roots to Brickell's Trading Post, from where they would go by schooner to Key West for sale to northern biscuit makers.

The peak of coontie processing occurred during the first two decades of the twentieth century. During World War I, the federal government bought large quantities of processed coontie starch because it was apparently the first food identified that mustard gas victims could tolerate. For a time the mill operated 18 hours a day to keep up with government orders. In 1919 the largest coontie mill, owned by Albert Baxter Hurst, relocated from along the New River in Ft. Lauderdale to Kendall in Dade County, specifically the southwest corner of U.S. 1 and South Kendall Dr., the present-day SW 104th St. Children in particular were thought to benefit from root starches, and one of the mill's customers was Nabisco. Hurst later sold the facility to the Joseph Morningstar Company. However, this last commercial starch mill didn't survive much longer; it closed its doors following major destruction wrought by the 1926 hurricane.

But business-related storm clouds had appeared on the horizon well before the hurricane. Three facts conspired to put an end to the 80-year-old industry. First, *Z. integrifolia* is a very slow-growing plant, and its vast populations could not be replaced as fast as they were being dug up. Second, human settlement in southern Florida meant that many counties were being lost to land-clearing for residential subdivisions. Finally, in 1925 the U.S. Food and Drug Administration ruled that county starch could not be sold as arrowroot, a name which really belonged to the tuber of a species of *Maranta*. The 1926 hurricane was simply the final straw. In the 1950s a metal marker commemorating the A.B. Hurst Mill was installed at the Kendall site. In the 1970s the marker was moved to Dante Fascell Park in South Miami, but it later disappeared, the likely victim of five-fingered liberation.

Depletion of the cycad population did more than ruin the Florida arrowroot starch industry. It very nearly wiped out the state's *Atala* butterflies (*Eumaeus atala*), whose larvae feed on the leaflets of *Z. integrifolia*. In fact, in the middle of the twentieth century, government experts at both the state and federal levels concluded that the butterfly was extinct. Perhaps because it was considered defunct, the *Atala* was not placed on the federal Endangered Species List. Nevertheless, it began to make a comeback.†† Concerned citizens began a breeding program to boost populations. Then, in a strange irony, homeowners started installing counties as ornamental plants on the very lands from which the species had been ousted by urban development. *Z. integrifolia* has now come full circle!

†† Bahamian *Atalas* were always abundant and may well have been blown into southern Florida from time to time by easterly winds.

My Foray into the World of Staghorns

by Reggie Whitehead

Many years of my life have passed, and sadly, many plants that I carefully, albeit apparently, not too carefully have cultivated, have gone to their maker. I do not mean to suggest that they have reverted to the spores, or seeds from which they came. I suppose, I have always been interested in plants of one kind or another -- my earliest memories of my foray into plants is of coaxing watermelon seeds to sprout, and cultivating a small, tidy garden of "green beans," and I suppose hoping that they were magical, and would one day grow into some sort of magical beanstalk.

However, as life marched on, and my interests grew beyond sprouting watermelon seeds and encouraging "green beans" to grow, at the age of approximately 12 years old, I spied a staghorn fern, growing in someone's garden. Intrigued by this strange looking plant, with its antler-like appendages, I fell in love. Around 20 years old, while attending a flea market in Miami, on an early Sunday morning, I happened upon a vendor who was selling one of these "staghorns," and I knew that I had to have this particular plant -- as I entered the adult-phase of my life. So, I plunked down the \$20 dollars, and bought the plant which consisted of a sphagnum moss-filled, wire-basket approximately 12 inches around, with three staghorn pups attached to it -- **THUS began my deep and mysterious sojourn into the world of ferns.**

Not sure of how or when I learned that these-antlered plants were indeed ferns, but once I had my first one, I set about learning all about them, totally unaware of the mysterious effect these "ferns" would eventually have upon my life.

Continued, next page

Little did I realize that I was opening this Pandora's Box of verdant wonder. I joined the local fern society (The South Florida Fern Society, back in the 70's), and felt comfortable with these other devotees of ferns, or pteridophytes, as I would soon come to know them, and pretty much consecrate my life to. The very first "fern" book I bought was Wendy Frank's *Platycerium Fern Facts*. What a magical experience that was -- although the simple paperback was in black and white, it was filled with wonderful photos of the then 18-species, and a wonderful collection of the known cultivars that filled the gardens of some of Ms. Frank's fellow California staghorn enthusiasts. The first thing that I learned was that I would soon begin using the high-falutin nomenclature of "Platycerium," and continue to recognize what these species were, e.g. *Platycerium bifurcatum*, or *Platycerium stemaria*. And in time, I would eventually learn how to distinguish a *Platycerium grande*, from a *Platycerium superbum*.

My world was now devoted to the *Platycerium* species, and I set about trying to collect all "18 species." And I did collect them by attending fern shows, and keeping my eyes and ears open for private collectors who specialized in some of the "good stuff." At the time, the major hobbyists were Virginia Ault, Jerry Horne, and Charles Alford. Well, I wanted to be a member of that special club too. Learning about staghorns, led me to another well-known author, Roy Vail whose book, *Platycerium Hobbyist's Handbook* became my second major staghorn resource. But then, as knowledge has a way of doing, it became contagious, and I soon discovered Barbara Joe Hoshizaki's *Fern Grower's Manual* that added to my growing interest of ferns and fern books. And today, my collection of ferns and fern books has dramatically increased and, of course, I scratch my head and wonder: "How on earth did this happen?" Well, happily I have enjoyed learning about staghorns, and other ferns, and have really enjoyed the many wonderful resources I can always rely on.

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