MEETING REMINDER •

Monday, March 26, 2018 at 7:30 pm in the Garden House
Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, Corbin A
Guest Speaker: Chip Jones [see bio on page 3]
Refreshments will be served.

Co-President’s Message by Marie Nock

The other day I was thinking about what I most value about the Tropical Fern & Exotic Plant Society and decided it was the collective horticultural and botanical knowledge, friendship and experience of our membership. The resource that our society holds is incredible and is there to tap into through a conversation at a meeting, a phone call or an email. If I have a palm question, I’ll call Ellis Brown or Jeff Searle. If I’m looking for a specific fern the Tastingers, the Holts or Reggie and Tom are contacted. Jose Lopez, Jeff Searle and Lamar Sapp are my croton contacts. Orchid questions go to David Foster, Georgia Tasker or Sandy Schultz. When searching for an answer on aroids, Bruce McAlpin, Enid Offolter or Ron Weeks are my contacts. Phil Illo and Ellis Brown are the people I trade medinilla plants and information with – Phil is great for information on begonias and orchids too. Craig Morell can answer any horticultural question no matter how complex. Chip Jones is my cycad guru.
Rory Antolak and Scott Cohen are the people I like to trade extremely rare plants with because they have even more rare plants to trade back.

Jesse Durko is great for plant enthusiasm, inspiration and new introductions. Georgia and Sandy are good travel companions to exotic plant destinations. Chad Husby opens me up to plant possibilities through his plant collection travels and always has me waiting to see the goodies he is bringing to FTBG. And I get to share the passion of growing and collecting tropical plants with the entire membership at our meetings, our Show and Sale and our Holiday Party. My appreciation to all of you!

On another topic, it’s time to think about the TFEPS Show and Sale scheduled for May 26 – 27 in the Garden House at FTBG. It’s time to start grooming the plants you’ll enter in the show and to begin growing plants you’d like to place in the Member’s Sale if you’d like to sell a few. You may also become a vendor by contacting Vivian Waddell (vcwaddell@yahoo.com). Many volunteer opportunities exist during set-up, the show itself and break down so please consider how you’d like to be involved. Marnie Valent is Show Chair and may be contacted at valentmarnie@gmail.com.

So, mark your calendars; it’s only two months away!
Chip Jones has been a resident of southern Florida for 16 years and has been gardening much longer. Originally from northern Alabama, he studied horticulture at Alabama A&M University in Huntsville.

His work history includes vegetative propagation of gymnosperms in South Carolina, New England native plants, and tropical landscaping.

At the nursery for his company, Jones Landscaping, in Davie, Chip has been growing palms, cycads, bromeliads, and a wide variety of other plant interests.

He also travels extensively to observe plant habitats and horticulture in the tropics.

Important dates to remember are:

- **Monthly Meetings** – the fourth Monday of the month: January through June, September and November

  **TFEPS Show and Sale** – May 26 – 27, 2018

  **TFEPS Auction** – October 22, 2018
February Raffle Table presented by Jose Lopez & Tom Moore
Co-President Marnie Valent opened the meeting by welcoming new members and guests. She thanked Janet Reed for her work editing the TFEPS newsletter and Emalyl Israel for administering food service at the meeting. She noted that the raffle table for this meeting was provided by Jose Lopez and Tom Moore.

Marnie reminded attendees that the 2018 co-presidency arrangement is conditioned on other members stepping up. The Society is still looking for a recording secretary to take minutes during general meetings. Transcribed minutes are due by the 15th of the month in which the next meeting is to be held. Those interested in the position should contact her.

Vivian Waddell announced that we need a volunteer for the hospitality table for the April and May meetings.

Paul Marcellini announced that TFEPS now has a Facebook group and that he, Chad Husby and Skye Palmer are the administrators. It is a closed group, and those who wish to participate must apply. Rules for the group will be posted right away.

**TREASURER’S REPORT:** Our current balance is $14,543.75. From this point forward, there will be a 50¢ surcharge for memberships paid by debit or credit cards.
Craig Morell is director of The Kampong in Coconut Grove. Prior to that, he was curator of the property. He came to The Kampong, longtime home of Dr. and Mrs. David Fairchild, after serving for 11 years as horticulturist at Pinecrest Gardens. He presented meeting attendees with post-Hurricane Irma insights:

Hurricane Irma was like no other. It was not severe, but it was long-lasting – 16 hours in our area. Structures, for the most part, did not fail, but trees and shrubs certainly did. Craig asked, “Did we see trends in certain plants?” The answer was no. “Natives vs. exotics?” No again. His conclusion is that the reasons for the substantial damage to trees and shrubs were bad maintenance and poor planting following Hurricane Andrew. Many trees planted in pre-Andrew years did well because the dynamite once used to create planting holes fractured the rock, allowing roots to get a good toehold.

Craig reported on a recent symposium dealing with the lessons learned from Hurricane Irma. Among the suggestions was increased emphasis on species choice. On the question as to what steps large gardens/public spaces can take, the consensus was that they should maintain tree and shrub collections well and plant in clusters so that specimens can support each other. Although participants considered it better to plant large trees, that is, of course, expensive. They did agree that maintenance firms should be encouraged to apply finer techniques.

Craig stated that there was more damage at the 8-acre Kampong than at the 83-acre Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden. 262 trees were blown down or otherwise damaged, leading to a recovery cost of $150,000. He offered an analogy to put the recovery process into perspective: It will take Florida Power & Light seven years to fully repair damage from Hurricane Irma. It is the same with trees; just having new leaves appear is not a sign of full recovery.

Craig then provided comparisons to show that there was more canopy damage than tree catastrophes. Some quick decisions had to be made. One of the most significant had to do with the large Baobab tree near the Kampong entrance. It had already gone down in four hurricanes prior to Irma: Cleo, Andrew, Katrina and Wilma. Over that time, the venerable tree had suffered major loss of fibrous roots, and major roots had not branched much. In the past, the Baobab had been uprighted by running cables to other trees, but after Hurricane Irma, the cables were attached to 20 tons of ‘deadmen,’ concrete blocks buried in the ground.
The Kampong is one of five facilities belonging the National Tropical Botanical Garden. NTBG’s Hawaii-based Chief Executive Officer, Chipper Wichman, allowed Craig to close The Kampong to facilitate recovery efforts; it did not reopen for three months. Craig adopted a conservative approach to trimming trees that were still producing leaves. The cost for standing up downed trees reached $46,000.

Individual experiences provide guidance going forward, whether for garden directors or homeowners. Triplaris likes to fall, so planting spots should be chosen carefully. The Cannonball Tree, *Couroupita guianensis*, went over. A week after all the leaves were removed, it flushed new leaves, though still on the ground. By mid-March it was flowering!

Damage was everywhere on the property. The debris in front of the entrance gate took three days to clear. Photos taken by drone showed erosion, as well as devastation caused by tornadic and/or downburst activity.

Remedies other than light canopy trimming and heavy watering by way of drip irrigation included solid staking, along with light organic fertilization. Craig is a fan of keeping trees staked for a long time; for older trees, that’s measured in years. In most cases, he recommends not overdoing the care. Old dogma held that storm-damaged trees should not be fertilized for a year, but Craig found that trees respond well to immediate light applications. Rooting hormones also help a lot, but there is no need to use synthetic fertilizers for about six months. He also found Superthrive to be very beneficial, and it outperformed the other products he used. Superthrive should not be sprayed. Rather, it should be used as a root drench. It requires less water than the alternatives.

The cost for the next five years of The Kampong’s recovery is estimated to be $250,000. Trees will need annual pruning over that period. Craig’s approach is to leave most of a tree’s canopy intact unless it shows signs of serious dehydration. The all-important irrigation following Hurricane Irma was complicated by the lack of power. However, a battery-operated timer overcame that problem and did the job for four months. Based on his experience, Craig recommends applying irrigation for ½-1 hr. every 1-3 days until a tree’s canopy starts to reappear. He opposes drenching once a week. Drip irrigation is very good, and should be used nightly during the recovery process. The method is approved even under Phase III water restrictions, because it does not waste water.
The effort to reestablish the Baobab cost $24,000! A $3 million crane rated at 275-ton capacity and renting for $2,500 an hour was brought in to raise the tree. Even at that, 10 tons of weight had to be cut off the tree; Craig likened its new look to that of a large stalk of broccoli, but even in its svelte state, the tree still weighed 26 tons. One of the decisions made going forward was to keep canopies open, not only for the Baobab, but also for mangos, avocados, and flowering trees.

The report shifted next to the Point, the narrow spit where The Kampong meets Biscayne Bay. Hurricane Irma’s lengthy pounding washed up large rocks, including some in the 1,200-lb. range, from the bay. Nearby palms, including a coconut sentry near the wooden observation bench, held up well, but sea grape and other trees did not. Craig called the Coconut Palm magical. He wondered whether it might have come from New Jersey, because it has an attitude!

Elsewhere around the property, the degree of harm varied. The water distiller created by Alexander Graham Bell, Dr. Fairchild’s father-in-law, was damaged. And although mangroves held up, the succulent garden was totally wiped out, 125 species lost. There was meager compensation: 17 unmatched flip flops were among the debris washed ashore.

While the Point bore the brunt of the assault from the bay, the Fairchilds’ house came out okay, protected by its elevation 20 ft. above sea level, close to the highest in Miami.

One of the first actions taken toward The Kampong’s recovery was to clear a path. Another move in that direction was heavy irrigation. The property uses municipal water for irrigation, and in the quarter following the hurricane, a water bill of $14,950 was rung up. Tree-trimming was also quickly initiated. Most trees were cut back by 25%. In many cases 100% of leaves were stripped from damaged trees. A Brosimum alicastrum had to be cut back drastically, and an Albizia (f/k/a Samanea) saman was cut down entirely. It not only had been planted in the wrong place, but it featured heavy, dense wood.

Naturally, several delays were encountered along the road to recovery. Triage included checking for utility problems. Then a much-in-demand shipment of chainsaws was ‘lost.’ (In an aside, Craig noted that Stihl, Echo and Husqvarna make good chainsaws.)
Following the second flush of new growth, the branches of a recovering tree should be trimmed back lightly – just 10%. For defoliating trees, trimming should be increased to about 20%.

In concluding his presentation, Craig expressed the belief that landscapes will return to normal in 3-5 years. Experts say that plant death may occur up to eight years after a damaging event. Craig speculates that the old Baobab may take 20-30 years to return to its old look.

The current state of The Kampong’s recovery effort? Two old ‘great’ trees were lost. Of the 262 trees downed or damaged by Hurricane Irma, just 21 were lost, and most of them were trash. After months of intense work, Craig and his staff are at last able to exhale.
Raffle Table Providers

- March 26, 2018  Stephanie LaRusso & Wicked Mike
- April 23, 2018  Ree Gardens & Rory Antolak
- May 28, 2018    Ralph Hernandez & Bob Benaim
2018 OFFICERS:

Co-Presidents: Marie Nock (305) 232-2257    Vice President: Chad Husby (321) 474-2753
Marni Valent (305) 233-5929

Secretary:                            Treasurer:  Bob Benaim (305) 793-9755

DIRECTORS at LARGE:

Ellis Brown (305) 484-7997 [2016-2017]    Paul Marcellini (305) 299-0690

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT:

Chad Husby (321) 474-2753

2018 DIRECTORS:

The board consists of TFEPS officers, the immediate past president, and elected directors at large.

2018 COMMITTEES:

Hospitality:                             Newsletter Editor:

Emalyl Israel (305) 235-0886            Janet Reed (305) 235-9337

Membership:

Sherrin Smith (305) 213-2598

Raffle Table:

Ralph Hernandez (786) 261-4856

Special Sales:                           Show & Sales:

Marie Nock (305) 232-2257              Vivian Waddell (305) 665-5168

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Member Application - 2018

YEARLY DUES ARE FOR CALENDAR YEAR JANUARY—DECEMBER

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