Tropical Fern & Exotic Plant Society, Inc. 
Newsletter

Volume 13, Issue 9 Editor: Reggie Whitehead November 2011

Auction in Review
Date—October 24, 2011
Annual Fund raising auction
Our Auction was called to order at 7:30. Preview of the plants began at 7 p.m.
Hospitality—everyone, including people we’ve never met—all coordinated by Emalyl Israel and Martha Bogaards.
Auction ended at — 9:40

This month’s meeting was the much-anticipated auction, in which plant fanatics enter the Garden House at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, and see row after row of plants available for auction. This year’s auction had a good showing of plants, although the crowd was thin. This light turnout had 2 differing aspects to it: it made for fewer dollars for the Society, but the bidding process was much faster, often leading to better prices for the buyer.

There were several stars in the line-up of plants, most notably some impressive specimens of Asplenium nidus-avis, and surprise showings of Platycerium quadridichotomum and P. stenaria, both of which show up rarely at auctions. There were unusual crotons, several species of Justicia, a very rare Fernandoa, and a body-sized cluster of Platycerium bifurcatum. Palm Platycerium quadridichotomum seedlings, Plumerias, Caladiums, Anthuriums, and Calatheas 

My First Staghorn Fern
by Reggie Whitehead

My life as a fern collector began innocently enough by the chance viewing of a staghorn fern in someone’s backyard. Little did I realize at the time that that viewing would start me on a path to remote jungles looking for other ferns.

I acquired my first staghorn at a flea market in Miami. There were three staghorn pups attached around a wire basket, and over time those pups grew into larger plants and eventually produced pups of their own. I still have the plant, and today it is a spectacular specimen. You know the type, the kind that is suspended by a heavy chain and hangs down from the branch of an oak tree.

When I bought my first plant, back in the 70’s, staghorns were becoming widely noticed, and subsequently their popularity made them the objects of random theft. My plant was too small to really attract attention, but then over time as I began to cultivate and propagate these interesting plants, I still kept them hanging around on my patio. Eventually, I began moving them out into the landscape, and subsequently attaching them to trees — their native host.

As I began learning about them, I decided that I needed to grow as many of them as our South Florida climate would allow. I bought Wendy Franks Platycerium Fern Facts book, and proceeded to hunt down many of the species. As I found the different species, from a variety of sources, I would check

Next Meeting,
Monday, November 28
We present Roger Hammer who will speak on Florida Icons at our next meeting.

What makes Florida, Florida? With this entertaining collection of photos, anecdotes, and little-known facts, find out the story behind fifty of the Sunshine State’s best-known and beloved icons. Included in the program are such Florida icons as tropical flowering trees, Florida’s native orchids, the American crocodile, Apalachicola oysters, Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, Everglades National Park, worm grunting, and even pink plastic lawn flamingos.

Raffle table is supplied by Peter Kouchalakos and Steve Correale.

Platycerium bifurcatum 7:30 p.m. — See you there!!!

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complemented the array of plants for auction. One of the plants I’ve never seen at an auction was a really interesting garden plant: *Gloxinia perennis*, an easy-to-grow stoloniferous plant that produces 8 inch tall stems of blue-lavender bell-shaped flowers.

But is was the opposite end of the room which had an equal array of desirables: the smorgasbord of food that was brought in to such an extent that there was hardly any room left available on 7 long tables! In the many society meetings I have attended, this array of food and drink was unrivaled except at the grandest of holiday dinners. Kudos to the members who spared no effort to bring in their best dishes, and I can say that the Pecan Pie (originated in Marie Nock’s kitchen) was not only delicious, but gone within minutes of its appearance. (I could wax poetic about its fabulous, nutty-sweet, perfectly baked, buttery-crust excellence).

We really appreciate the fine work that Emalyl Israel and Martha Bogaard contribute to the society. At our functions, they always make sure that we are all very well fed and attended to. Once again, thanks to Emalyl and Martha, and all of the people who assist them.

Secretary’s note: For future attendees, when you go to a TFEPS auction, bring your appetite; you won’t be disappointed.

The crowd members seemed quite pleased with their hauls, and there was nary a leaf left to worry about when we all left.

Respectfully Submitted,

Craig Morell, C.P.A.
Certified Plant Addict
them off in my book.

The first and probably most important source was Jerry Horne in Miami. After Jerry, there was John Bender, and then Richard Button, and Fantastic Gardens and soon I began hearing about different plant people (many whose names I have completely forgotten) who had different species of staghorns. After many years of collecting, I learned of Charles Alford, who was growing all of the species from spores. I eventually was fortunate to visit his first nursery in the Apopka area, and see all of the species doing so well.

As the years have come and gone, many of the staghorns also have died off for various reasons, but 30 years later, I still have a collection of these beautiful plants and still am in awe of how unique they are.

There are some that are a little difficult to grow even in the paradise we know as South Florida, but still many of the species are well worth the growing.

Raffle Tables for 2011 — 2012

November 28 ................................................................. Peter Kouchalakos and Steve Correale
December ................................................................. Annual Holiday Party
January 23 ................................................................. Frank and Sally Tasting
February 27 ................................................................. Redland Nursery
March 26 ................................................................. Steve and Marie Nock
April 23 ................................................................. Philipp Iloo and David McLean
May 28 ................................................................. Tim Anderson and Craig Reid

Welcome New Members

Cindy P. Arnold ............................................ Barbara Krantz
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Mistakes teach us more than successes. I appreciate the beautiful blue-gray lacy foliage of the California poppy, *Eschscholzia californica*, and the liquid sunshine of its flowers. The seedlings were robust and full of promise as I carefully transplanted them. I watched in disappointed amazement as every one of them wilted and died. This plant simply did not tolerate ANY disturbance to its root system. I knew that many of our native terrestrial orchids seldom survived transplanting. What goes on here? Aware that 80% of vascular plant families have mutualistic relationships with fungi called arbuscular mycorrhiza, I thought this might be a factor. No! The California poppy just won’t tolerate any disturbance.

The arbuscular mycorrhiza did arouse my interest. It seems that many plants reward the fungi in their roots by giving carbohydrates to the fungi in exchange for nutrients like phosphates and nitrates. It seems that the more generous the fungi is the more the plant rewards it with sugars and other goodies that the fungi need. One, no doubt wonders, how applications of fertilizers affects this delicate relationship. And what damage could be caused by applications of fungicides? The roots, being hidden from view, often escape our concerns and appreciation.