February in Review

Date—February 24, 2014
Speaker- Dr. Mike Maunder
Topic—Botanical Gardens- The Good, Great and Weird
Treasurer’s report balance- $9847.12
President called meeting to order at—7:35
Hospitality– Almost everyone! Enormous selection, a King’s Table
Raffle provided by—Bloomin’ Good, several TFEPS members
Meeting ended at—9:30 p.m.

Dr. Mike Maunder, former Executive Director at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, spoke this evening on his personal selection of botanical gardens, selected from the myriad he has visited. He was trained at the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, and schooled at the University of Reading. A great many people locally and nationally are familiar with his ease of presence both on stage and in person, his endless knowledge of all things botanical, and possessing the rare talent to make you feel better after speaking with him.

After some interesting history lessons of how botanical gardens came into modern life via herbal and medicinal gardens of the 1500s in Europe, the “modern” botanical really saw its genesis as collections plants of note for gardeners in the late 1800s. Starting with the Pisa Garden in 1541 and several medicinal / herbal gardens in Great Britain (seemingly overseen only by directors whose names began with “Sir”..), some of the more familiar gardens sprouted in the late 1800s, such as the Singapore Botanical Garden, directed and created by Sir Henry Ridley. Many such garden directors are familiar to us by way of plant species names, such as Wickham, Ridley, Sloane, and numerous others.

Modern botanical gardens range a wide spectrum from very natural gardens such as Alice Springs in Australia to more artificial or contrived gardens, such as the South China Botanical gardens or Gardens by the Bay in Singapore. The Eden Project in Cornwall, England, may epitomize an artificial garden, since its collections are almost entirely de novo on the site in the last few decades. Longwood Gardens was a highly structured and formal garden formerly a DuPont estate from the Golden Era of the late 19th century, as opposed to the Oaxaca (Mexico) Ethnobotanical garden, whose name says it all. There are gardens which bridge several genres, connecting ancient lands with agricultural and horticultural collections. Several gardens in the western US states are large land tracts comprised of chaparral or desert areas, some include zoological collections melted into a botanical setting. On his “Must-see” list are Kirstenbosch Gardens in South Africa, Arizona-Sonora Desert Botanical Garden, Nong Nooch in Thailand, the Huntington Library and Gardens in Pasadena, California, and the Arboretum d’Antsokay in Madagascar.

The power point program which accompanied his lecture was outstanding, and gave us all a better idea of the need for and value of botanical gardens, irrespective of size or locality. As agents for social change, as viable institutions that equal the rank of any other public service, and as species repositories and living banks for regional diversity, such gardens are a necessary part of the green world.

Respectfully submitted,
Craig Morell, C.P.A.
Certified Plant Addict

Next Meeting,
Monday, March 24

The Tropical Fern & Exotic Plant Society presents Jody Haynes who will speak on Cycads on Monday, March 24th at 7:30 pm. The meeting will take place at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, in the Corbin Building.

Cycads represent the oldest extant seed-bearing plants in the world. Collectively, they are also one of the most threatened plant groups. As of the most recent World List of Cycads, there are 331 species in 10 genera. All grow in tropical and subtropical areas, and many are appropriate for South Florida.

Jody will be talking about the many Cycad species and how to successfully grow and propagate them. He will also bring a number of species that will be for sale after his presentation as well as a couple for the Raffle.

There is no admission fee and the public is invited to attend this presentation. There will be plants donated by Ree Gardens (Steve and Marie Nock) for Raffle. Refreshments will be served.
**The Tropical Fern & Exotic Plant Society, Inc.**  
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**Enjoyment is a Davallia fern**

Growing ferns for pure enjoyment has been a long time hobby for fern enthusiast Jule Pauliny and the rabbit’s foot fern (*Davallia trichomanoides*) is one of his favorite subjects.

*Davallia trichomanoides* is an epiphyte which can grow on tree branches with a bit of moss, or on pieces of drift wood or feather-rock. It can also be treated as a terrestrial fern and grown among rocks on the ground in a shady garden. Very often it is grown in wire baskets or tree fern fiber containers.

If growing in a wire basket, choose a good wire basket, one that is flat on the bottom is easy to work with. Place a scrap of shade cloth on the inside at the bottom. This keeps the sphagnum moss from falling away as it deteriorates. Next put a layer of damp moss about 3 inches deep on the bottom, the fill the sides of the basket with a layer of moss one and a half inches to two inches thick — do not pack too tightly.

Then with a good loose potting mix, fill in the center leaving enough room in the middle for a clay pot. The size will depend on the size of the basket. Plug the drainage holes with a cork before placing in this pocket.

Cut some rhizomes from a large *Davallia*— these can usually be found along the sides and are quite loose. Now, place the rhizomes against the outside of the basket, carefully weaving them through several wires. Always keep the tiny roots facing into the moss. Fresh green fronds can be left on the rhizome — later they will naturally fall away.

Fill the clay pot with water as needed and it will slowly percolate down through the porous pot and water the fern evenly.

*Davallias* like shade and some humidity. In the spring, Jule cuts the old fronds off — as soon as the new fiddleheads can be seen.

Jule uses an old wine barrel which he has cut in half as a handy soaking vessel for his baskets. He often adds liquid fertilizer to the water.

Then the baskets are hung from a line to drain. Rabbit’s foot ferns like to be kept damp, but they must not be overwatered, as the rhizomes can become spongy and water-logged, especially at the bottom of the basket. They have few insects.

If you want a hardy fern, yet one that is soft and beautiful, the *Davallia trichomanoides* will give years of pleasure in your garden.

(This article originally appeared in the Los Angeles International Fern Society bulletin).
**DUES ARE DUE**
Dues for 2014 are currently being collected. Have you rejoined TFEPS? If not, Please do so today.

Please make checks payable to TFEPS (and mail to):

Bob Benaim, Treasurer
P.O. Box 902094
Homestead, FL 33090-2094

Dues are (still):
$15.00 - single
$17.00 - for two members at the same address
(Dues may be paid at our March meeting.)
(Also, if there are changes that we should know about, e.g. phone number or e-mail address, please use the application and include it with your dues.)

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**NEWSLETTER EDITOR NEEDED**

The current editor is retiring from this post and so, we are looking for a new editor. If you are interested in putting our newsletter together, please contact, Ron Keifert at (305) 445-7228, or e-mail him at: hwy253@hotmail.com

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**Welcome New Members**

*Rochelle Seide and Alan Pinhas*
21299 Harrow Court
Boca Raton, FL 33433-2040
(954) 295-3512
rseide21729@gmail.com

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**March 24**

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**Ree Gardens**

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**Tropical Fern & Exotic Plant Society**
P.O. Box 902094
Homestead, FL 33090-2094

___ Individual Member $15. ___ Household Membership $17.

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(Yearly dues are for calendar year - January - December)

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Being such visual creatures we tend to avoid dark situations. Charles Darwin was a member of the Lunar Society. This was a group of scientists who met once a month to discuss recent scientific advances. The Society derived its name from the fact that the meetings were always scheduled on the night of the full moon. The celestial illumination made travel to and from the meetings much nicer. It seems only natural that we are most comfortable in well lighted environments which means that we miss a lot of horticultural activity. A nighttime walk through your garden or greenhouse can be quite an education. Accompanied with an inexpensive LED flashlight you will discover many things.

The great orb spiders spin their immense webs after dark. Their eyes glowing bright red like hot coals. Snail and slug pests are easily found and eliminated. Other pests are also found once their cloak of protective darkness fails them. Many plants reproduce during the dark hours and emit delightful fragrances. A night walk through your plant collection is an adventure worth repeating. Try it! It is convenient and enlightening.