



THE INTERNATIONAL PALM SOCIETY

Jan. 2023

NEWSLETTER

Palms & Poets Edition

"On the last day of the world
I would want to plant a tree"
– W.S. Merwin

Newsletter reporting from the Hawaiian Islands begins with the Maui pre-tour, and then the following six editions will be devoted to the 32nd IPS Biennial. Included will be two-part photographic tours of spectacular public gardens, enviable palm collections, and breathtaking private reserves. This unprecedented six-month spread is the product of an unequalled Biennial of overwhelming palm pageantry.

THE MAUI PRE-BIENNIAL TOUR

It certainly was no surprise that the Maui pre-Biennial tour was **sold-out**. And for good reason: Mary Lock curated a terrific itinerary starring The Merwin Conservatory (where, fortunately for us, Mary serves on the board). Mary and her husband, Michael, even hosted lunch at their home (including fresh lychees from their trees).

The indefatigable Mary Lock flanked by Director Cindy Adair and President Robert Blenker. Mary, of course, was waiting at the Maui airport (OCG) to welcome us with snacks and drinks.



The Maui Pre-Biennial Tour



Up at the crack of dawn, easy with the time difference for the mainlanders, Boyd and Stacy Marts along with Robert and Grisel Blenker (beneath a perfect *Pritchardia*) are fired-up for an epic day of palm viewing.

The Maui Pre-Biennial Tour

The Merwin Conservancy

“The Merwin Palm Collection is an amazing assemblage of extraordinary palms that have transformed the ecology of the small valley where they are planted.” – Dr. John Dransfield

United States poet laureate William Stanley Merwin (1927–2019) and his wife, Paula Dunaway Merwin (1936–2017) established The Merwin Conservancy in 2010. The collection, over 3000 palms, more than 400 species representing 130 genera, is the result of over four decades of (very) active planting. Instead of a formal garden, the collection resembles a dense tropical rainforest. As Dr. Dransfield noted, the palms appear much “as they would in the wild.” An enjoyably readable biography of Mr. Merwin can be found here: [About W.S. Merwin.](#)

The International Palm Society was absolutely besotted with our tour of The Merwin Conservancy. Their superb newsletter kindheartedly demonstrated a reciprocal fondness: "October was a month of special visits to The Merwin Conservancy. We welcomed members of the International Palm Society, whose visit to Maui opened a long-deferred annual meeting. Our staff delighted in hosting this group, and in seeing the garden anew through their eyes, words, and expertise." Please subscribe to the Merwin newsletter and view membership details for The Merwin Conservancy here: [The Merwin Conservancy — We tend a garden that speaks to the world.](#)



Sonnet Kekilia Coggins, Executive Director, and Sara Tekula (with the hat and walking stick), Director of Programs and Communications for The Merwin Conservancy, were our marvelous guides. Their affection for William and Paula, the land, as well as the Conservancy’s mission was palpable. Sara even interspersed our hike with apropos selections of Mr. Merwin’s poetry, creating a unique afternoon of palm appreciation.

The Maui Pre-Biennial Tour



Pritchardia glabrata, native to Maui.



At the edge of the forest, *Archontophoenix*, *Caryota*, and the Pacific Ocean.

A primer in stilt roots, *Socratea exorrhiza* (foreground) and *Versaffeltia splendida*.



Looking up into the crown of perhaps the tallest *Versaffeltia splendida* any of us had ever seen.

The Maui Pre-Biennial Tour



A huge Joey commanding attention.



Pinanga aristata with a gorgeous, mottled leaf.



Our first sighting of *Marojejya darianii* with the inimitable Sonnet Coggins providing scale. Sonnet writes the wonderful Merwin newsletter that is a welcome benefit of conservancy membership. Photo by Gregg Hamann.

The Maui Pre-Biennial Tour

The Welch Garden

In 1989 Jerry Welch, a retired dentist, and his wife, Robin, began planting palms in an abandoned field. Jerry was initially inspired by a rather random visit to a palm garden in Key West with massive old specimens. Like many of us back then, he started by studying any palm book he could find and dreamt about a palm garden of his own. I'm quite certain that the Welch's two-acre garden, resplendent with superbly grown and fully mature rare palms, has now far exceeded their dreams.



Dr. Jerry Welch with many happy admirers. The driveway is lined with towering *Roystonea oleracea*.

The Maui Pre-Biennial Tour



Roscheria melanochaetes, one of the six endemic monotypic genera from the Seychelles.

Certainly one of the largest *Chrysalidocarpus bejfo* outside of Madagascar.



While we are considering the Seychelles: Gregg Hamann "playing" a double coconut. Inset: The seed still visible in the ground.

Crownshaft detail.



The Maui Pre-Biennial Tour



Merojejya insignis, scale provided by Laz Priegues.



Close-up of the inflorescence of *M. insignis*.

Your trusty newsletter editor embracing a new crush (a palm, of course – I am, after all, a happily married man), *Lemurophoenix halleuxii*. Please note the absolutely fetching crownshaft detail.



The Maui Pre-Biennial Tour



Your editor's historically favorite palm, *Neoveitchia storkii* with its formal black crownshaft, fondly referred to (only by me) as the "tuxedo palm."



Metroxylon amicarum, close up.



This *Chrysalidocarpus* was planted as *C. tokoravina*, however the palm experts were not convinced that it was correctly identified. By the way, these debates are always very entertaining for us novices. Regardless of the true species, it's a rare and gorgeous plant.

The Maui Pre-Biennial Tour



Dypsis paludosa (yes, it's still a *Dypsis*). Commonly referred to as the candy cane palm and once known as *D. "florencei"* (a provisional name honoring the wife of its discoverer, Alfred Razafindratsira).

Contrary to popular belief, we palm aficionados are known to gaze at other flora and fauna. For example, Heliconias: This is *Heliconia chartacea*, aptly named 'Sexy-Pink.'



Areca vestiaria (orange), with dense stilt roots (inset).

And this fuzzy number is *H. xanthovillosa* 'Shogun.'



The Maui Pre-Biennial Tour



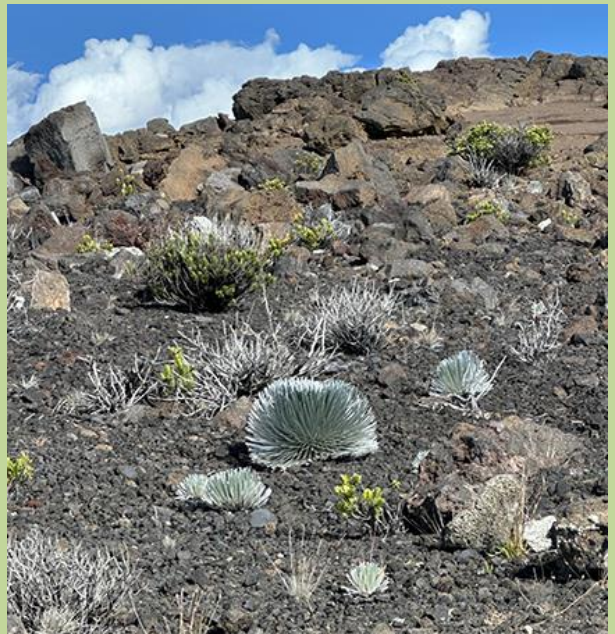
Turtles at Ho'okipa beach, a notable windsurfing site, on the north shore of Maui.



A gold dust day gecko (native to Madagascar) captured in silhouette on the broadly palmate leaf of *Kerriodoxa elegans*.

Haleakalā

No trip to Maui is complete without summiting Haleakalā and visiting the otherworldly silverswords in their sole native habitat. The silversword is *Argyroxiphium sandwicense* subsp. *macrocephalum* and is a member of the sunflower family, Asteraceae.



The Maui Pre-Biennial Tour

And don't forget the Nēnē! The Nēnē (pronounced nay-nay), or the Hawaiian goose, is the state bird of Hawaii. Once critically endangered, now there are over 2500 individuals in the wild. However it is still the rarest goose in the world. Photo by Gloria Batule.



Haleakalā steet signage.

The Maui Pre-Biennial Tour

Parting poem by W.S. Merwin, from *Opening the Hand*, 1983.

PALM

The palm is in no hurry to be different
and it grows slowly
it knows how to be a palm when it was a seed it knew
how to be a palm seed when it was a flower
it knew how to be
the flower of a palm
when it was a palm it grew slowly
and without eyes
in a salt wind

New Lifetime Members & Benefactors

On behalf of our 100% volunteer Board of Directors, I would like to recognize and thank our newest Lifetime Members of the IPS:

Cindy Adair
Peter Timmermans

We also welcome and thank our six newest Benefactors:

Cindy Andersen
Jason Dewees
Mary Lock
Boyd Marts
Jeff Marcus
Laz Priegues

Our mission to preserve palms in habitat requires like-minded plant conservationists like you! Please consider supporting our society by encouraging new memberships with fellow palm and tropical plant enthusiasts.



Upcoming Travel with the IPS

2023 IPS mid-term Board of Directors meeting, London:

Sunday May 21 though Thursday May 25

Including RBG Kew, RHS Chelsea Flower Show and Wakehurst Place

Capacity 50

Monday, January 16: registration opens for board members.

Monday, January 23: registration opens for benefactors, pending availability.

2023 IPS Premium Travel: Reunion Island (West Indian Ocean)

Hosted by the Palmeraie-Union

Sunday, October 29 through Monday, November 6

Capacity 25.

SOLD OUT

waiting list: info@palms.org

2024 The International Palm Society's 33rd Biennial: New Caledonia

(Southwestern Pacific Ocean)

Sunday, September 22 though Monday, September 30.

Capacity 150.

2026 The International Palm Society's 34th Biennial: Thailand

Dates to be announced.

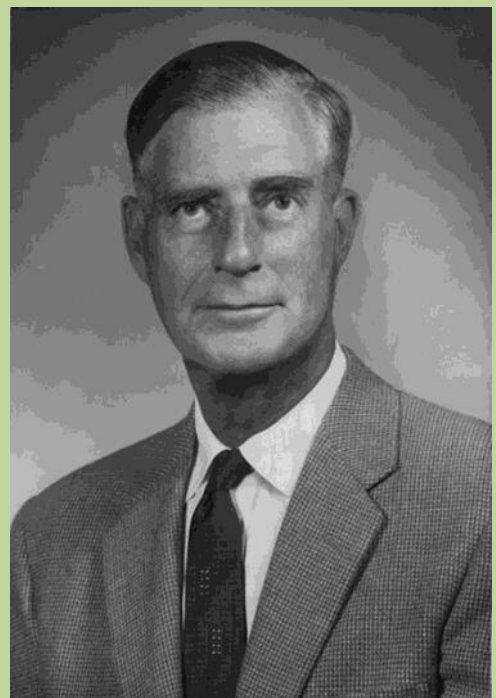
Capacity 300.

Past Presidents of the IPS: 1956–1964

This is the first of a six-part series recognizing the 24 former presidents of the International Palm Society. Each entry will include a photo with an accompanying vignette. These will be compiled on our webpage at palms.org for future reference.

1956–1957: Dent Smith, Florida

The International Palm Society's founder Dent Smith, served as its first president and first editor of *Principes*. Born in 1897 in Staunton Virginia, he led an "itinerant and impecunious lifestyle," which included stints in Mexico and New York City. After a successful career on Wall Street, he retired early, settled in Daytona Beach, Florida and tended to his beloved palm garden. By March 1955 he envisioned forming a palm society, and subsequently the first meeting of (what is now) the IPS came to pass at the Fairchild Tropical Garden on April 17, 1956.



Past Presidents of the IPS: 1956–1964

Although Mr. Smith experienced only a “thoroughly useless formal education,” he received numerous honors including a Doctorate of Science from the Florida Institute of Technology, the Founders Medal and the Robert H Montgomery Medal for distinguished achievement in the world of palms from Fairchild Tropical Garden (now Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden).

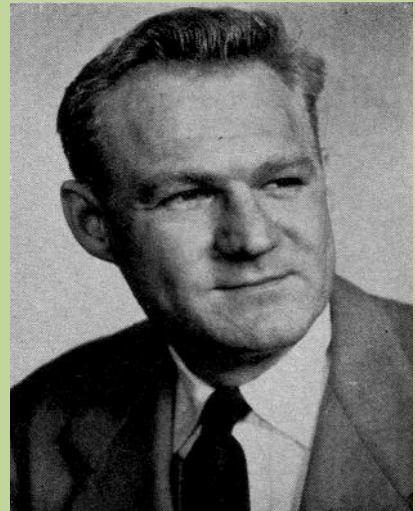
1957–1960: Dr. Walter Hodge, Florida

Walter Hodge received his PhD from Harvard University for his dissertation concerning the Flora of Dominica. Trained as an economic botanist, he and his wife, Barbara, traveled extensively, resulting in the publication of more than 200 scientific manuscripts. There are several eponymous plants named in his honor; alas no palms. An accomplished photographer of not only plants, Dr. Hodge amassed a formidable portrait collection of contemporary botanists (including the self-portrait at right). Remarkably, at one time he ranked the most cited photographer in the Encyclopedia Britannica.



1960–1962: Eugene Kitzke, Wisconsin

In his role as the head of research and development for the S. C. Johnson Co. in Racine, Wisconsin, Eugene Kitzke’s investigations focused on *Copernicia* and other waxy palms. He worked in Brazil (primarily at the Raposa plantation near Fortaleza) developing hybridization techniques of *C. prunifera*, the carnauba wax palm, for the wax industry. Hailing from Wisconsin, he remains the only IPS president not based in Florida, California, Hawaii nor Texas. Mr. Kitzke graduated from Marquette University (where he studied mycology) and earned a post-graduate degree in ecology.



1962–1964: David Barry Jr.,
California

Considered the “grand old dad” of California palm people, David Barry’s hobby later became the legendary nursery California Jungle Gardens, in Brentwood. There he introduced many new palms (including *Jubaeopsis caffra* and several species of *Chamaedorea*), as well as other tropical plants, to cultivation. For many years he administered the International Palm Seed Exchange Service [editor’s note: not the IPS Seedbank]. Additionally, he founded the International Bromeliad Society and served as its second president. Mr. Barry graduated from Stanford University (majoring in natural sciences) and worked in real estate.

Parting Shot

Good night, Maui. Although I'm still dreaming about the ahi poke at HuiHui, pork dumplings at Star Noodle, the Hula pie at (where else) the Hula Grill and the traditional haupia (chocolate-coconut) pie at Leoda's.

