



The Southeastern Palm Society™

Quarterly
Newsletter

Volume 3-3, Fall 2014

Editor: Jeff Stevens

www.sepalms.org and www.facebook.com/sepalms

SPS Fall Meeting

The Southeastern Palm Society's fall meeting will be held at the State Botanical Garden in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, October 11, 2014. The day begins at 10:00 am at the Visitor Center.

The variety of plants at the SBG is amazing and garden areas include tropical conservatory, herb and physic garden, and gardens specializing in native flora and plants of Spanish America, the Mediterranean and Middle East, China and Asia, and Southern heritage plants.

Tom McClendon, who visited recently adds, "The staff have added many palms and subtropicals, flowering annuals and perennials, and there is a home orchard featuring grapes, apples, figs, pawpaws, and hardy citrus!"

The State Botanical Garden is located just south of Athens at 2450 S. Milledge Avenue, Athens, GA 30605. For more of the garden's attractions and for directions, visit online at <http://botgarden.uga.edu>.

The fall meeting originally scheduled in southeastern Tennessee is postponed for a year. We apologize for inconvenience caused by the change in location and date.

SPS Summer Meeting Report

Tony Avent hosted the Southeastern Palm Society's summer meeting at Plant Delights Nursery and Juniper Level Botanic Garden in Raleigh, North Carolina, on August 9, 2014. Plant Delights donated to SPS \$150 from the sale of 5-gallon hybrid Butia palms that day. The following report and photos are provided by member John Boggan of Washington, DC. Read John's excellent blog and see his professional photographs at <http://dctropics.blogspot.com>.

Members of the Southeastern Palm Society were treated to a meeting last weekend at Plant Delights Nursery and Juniper Level Botanic Gardens in Raleigh, North Carolina. It had been several years



SPS Calendar 2014

SPS Fall Meeting

Saturday, October 11, 2014
State Botanical Garden of Georgia
2450 S. Milledge Avenue, Athens,
GA 30605

<http://botgarden.uga.edu>

Southeastern Citrus Exposition

Friday evening and Saturday,
November 14-15, 2014
University of Georgia, Tifton
Campus. The full agenda is at

[www.facebook.com/
SoutheasternCitrusExpo](http://www.facebook.com/SoutheasternCitrusExpo).

SPS 2015 Meetings

Plans for several meetings are in the works and others are under discussion. See the next newsletter for details.

since my last SPS meeting, and I'm always looking for any excuse to visit Plant Delights, so I decided to drive from Washington, DC to Raleigh to attend the meeting.

We were greeted and graciously hosted by Tony and Anita Avent. Attendance was on the low side, probably due to the weather; rain had been forecast and it was delivered! But seriously, how often do you get a personal tour around Plant Delights by Tony Avent himself? Even in the pouring rain (and I did get soaked) it was worth the trip.



Smiling Southeastern Palm Society members, with Tony Avent (front)

The day began with Tony giving a presentation about the history of the nursery and gardens, including some unbelievable before-and-after pictures. Tony also gave a quick run-down of how various palms had made it through the area's coldest winter in many years. Despite lows ranging from 4 to 9 degrees Fahrenheit on different parts of the property, most palms survived with little damage. Needle palms (*Rhaphidophyllum hystrix*) and dwarf palmettos (*Sabal minor*) came through completely unscathed—no surprise as these species suffered virtually no damage in the Washington, DC area either. Of the windmill palms (*Trachycarpus fortunei*), Tony said the Bulgarian strain seemed to suffer the least damage. *Sabal* × *brazoriensis* was another clear winner, coming through without damage. Even *Trachycarpus takil*—a specimen identified as the true species, and still of unknown hardiness—came through.

Tony also discussed his plans to ultimately convert the for-profit nursery into a not-for-profit botanic garden, a process that is already in the works. After the talk, the rain held off a bit longer and we were turned loose to visit and shop at our leisure.

We were then treated to a very nice lunch by Tony and Anita, and after that Tony took us on a tour of the nursery and gardens. Of course that's when it started to rain again, but my only complaint is

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that it made photography more or less impossible.

It's hard to describe what it's like to wander around Plant Delights. Tony is a businessman, but he's also passionate about plants and interested in the unusual and obscure. Everywhere you turn, every plant you look at, you see something new, or rare, or just plain fascinating. There are no other plant collections like it, at least not on the east coast, and every time I visit I find something I've never seen before. Having Tony lead the tour took it to a whole new level.

One advantage of the low turnout was that I had a chance to talk to Tony one-on-one, about our common interest in finding and breeding hardy begonias, about what makes a plant popular or profitable, and a number of other topics. Tony is very approachable, and calling him "affable" is an understatement. The first time I visited PDN, when he found out I was interested in hardy gesneriads and begonias, he whisked me away on a private tour as if I was his oldest friend.

I also caught up a bit with Gary Hollar, former SPS president and owner of Gary's Nursery in New Bern, North Carolina. The first time I visited PDN was also for an SPS meeting, when Gary was still president. The 2007 summer meeting was the 15th anniversary of the society and it had a huge turnout—nearly 100 people—so my expectations for subsequent meetings were a bit skewed!

Nevertheless I greatly enjoyed later meetings at Norfolk Botanical Garden (2008) and JC Raulston Arboretum (2009). In addition to visiting some wonderful gardens I



SPS members touring the gardens in the rain with Tony



Trachycarpus takil

might otherwise never see, one of the greatest pleasures of events like this is finally meeting the people I otherwise know only from online discussion lists, from Facebook, or as names in a society magazine.

And of course there were palms, palms, and more palms!

Everywhere you turned around, there were more. One surprise to me was that many were growing in fairly deep shade, and apparently doing quite well. In fact much of the property is heavily shaded, which made photography somewhat challenging on an overcast day!

Of course I couldn't come home empty-handed. I was very pleased that I limited my selection to four plants, and only one of those was an impulse purchase! But I'm already planning a trip back next spring for one of the nursery's open houses, among the few times during the year the nursery and gardens are open to the public.

For many more photos from this trip, see my [Plant Delights Nursery 2014](#) album.



Sabal × brazoriensis

Merrill Wilcox Passes Away at 84

We were saddened to learn of the passing of Merrill Wilcox on September 3, 2014 at the age of 84. He served in the U.S. army in the Korean War and later was Professor Emeritus at the University of Florida, joining the faculty of the Agronomy Department in 1960 and retiring in 1998.

A serious devotee of palms, Merrill established the palm garden at Kanapaha Botanical Gardens in Gainesville, Florida, and also shared advice and palms with many SPS members. Everyone who met him remembers his kind spirit and generosity.

Merrill's obituary offered this advice for those attending his funeral (characteristic of many gardeners we know): "Since Merrill was not fond of wearing suits, dress is casual." We will miss him.