



May 2016 Newsletter

Notes from Dot

The sometimes...

Our meetings: April and May

I am a big Jesse Durko fan, and his enthusiasm for finding different and easy plants for us to grow here is more than appreciated. I counted 66 people at the meeting, which showed that I am not alone in appreciating Jesse's contributions to our Garden Club and to plant growers in South Florida. Jesse brought samples of some of his newer acquisitions and the people who took them home had big smiles on their faces. I was pleased that the plant raffle table and mini auction brought in more than we spent for the meeting. All of the members who contributed those great plants are to be thanked as well as those who provided the really special 6th birthday foods. It's just great that so many people contribute to making us the best ever.

Jeff Searle will be speaking on palms in May, and I am also a supporter of Jeff the person and grower and of his nursery. Some car-sized trees that we've brought home in the past are now 30' beauties. We forgot to remind the May birthday people to bring in refreshments, so no one signed up. Another forgotten reminder was to ask you to enclose the pots of raffle plants in plastic bags before you bring them in. If the plants can't leak dirt, clean-up is so much easier. Knowing how enthusiastic your support has been I am really looking forward to the May meeting, when every plant will be bagged and the refreshment table will be bountiful. I also know the program will be good again.

Congratulations Chip

Chip grows many kinds of plants well, and recently he won four awards with ribbons and handsome glass pieces for various best categories at the Fairchild show in April.

We rambled

Old dog, young dog, 2 dumb dogs, please drive slowly!

One of my ramble perks was seeing the above on a sign; another was finding 14 perfect plants, and I did my part in our spending \$3,784.00 total at the four stops. I also got to know good people better, and I smiled and laughed so much, my face hurt. We bought beautiful orchids and special ferns at Quest Orchids. The unique ferns had been used by Yolonda for orchid show displays this winter and spring. We were served a variety of tasty breakfast foods and drinks. Lucky people near the front of the bus won 3 blooming orchids.

Our next stop was Redland Nursery. We could never have gotten into this 13 ½ acre wholesale nursery without Chip's help. Jeff Sullivan found almost enough palm trees to fill the bus, and several of us bought numerous Aroids. Thornless Crown of Thorn plants were "gotta-haves" for others. Each of us was given a foot high *Carpoxyton macrospermum*. I bought one of these for \$100 or more a few years back and mine was about 4 feet tall. It was one of the only palms that has every gone on the big palm forest in the sky. I will pass on what I just read, and maybe these will live for all of us. This palm should thrive in partial shade with regular moisture. (My dead palm was in full sun.) *C. macrospermum* is exceeding rare, endemic to warm rain forests in the Vanutu islands. It was discovered in 1987. It can grow to 90 feet tall and is described as one of the world's most beautiful palms. * I'm keeping a list of those who now have these special trees and the first one to grow a 5-foot-tall tree, should report in and get a reward. It will be fun to compare notes as they grow. Our yard space is limited, so you will find Bob's tree on the raffle table in May. (*Encyclopedia of Palms, by Riffle and Craft)

The next stop was Stelmar Gardens, and Phil's variety of shade loving plants can't be beat. Again we bought and bought, but not before we ate meat balls, cheese crackers, and apple betty which was life changing, at least for the moment. There was not a cubic micron of space under the bus after this stop, so the purchases from OFE had to go topside wherever we could find a space.

The last stop was OFE International for supplies, and they also offered very reasonably priced orchids which again were snapped up. After this stop we had wine and 'real' peanut butter cookies supplied by Gary Petonke. Gary couldn't go on the ramble when something came up, but he brought the cookies to the bus for us. Earlier Deloris Kawinski had high end chocolate bars for each of us, and Michael Schaberl provided two boxes of chocolate store chocolates that should have been enough for all, but some whose names won't be given, were a bit selfish. Many of us are hoping for an overnight ramble to Florida's west coast in the fall. On the trip home we formed the

one meeting Peanut Butter Sandwich Club which will meet at our house May 29th to make a fall trip plan.

President's Message

As I write it's almost May 1 and that means 2016, is flying by. The days are noticeably longer and we are less than 2 months away from the longest day of the year. It's no surprise that the garden seems to be changing quickly since the summer heat and rain are just around the corner. The tabebuias have bloomed as well as the floss silk trees and heliconias are already making magical lobster claws. The queen's crepe myrtles have changed their leaves as well as the live oaks. Now the mahogany trees are dropping leaves like golden snowflakes. Orchids should have been repotted so their burgeoning new roots can enjoy fresh potting mix. Phalaenopsis blooms are almost gone as are the jewel orchids and the Cattleyas and Encyclias and are in their glory. Everyone's sprinkler systems are showing weak areas as plants feel the stress of the hot, dry season. If all that written rambling made sense, then you are in the right place with Equality Park Garden Club. 2016 has also been productive for us. We've added 5 new board positions, done a major volunteer day to contribute to the Pride Center, had 4 wonderful speakers, and a spring Ramble to Homestead. As the year continues to roll along stay involved with the garden club.

How many 'love trees' do you own?

The translation of Philodendron is 'love tree'. Until recently my vision of Philodendron was that of the very common and most tough of all house plants. Other than Philodendron it is called Sweetheart plant. Mother had one in her kitchen that had trailed around a pair of windows three times. Somehow it thrived living with a dear woman who fried everything in butter. Now that I've become an Aroid collector I find that I've had some beautiful big Philodendrons for years, and the market has them in shades of bright light green to many darker red shades. If you are leaf lover, join me for quick update and then Google "Philodendron" and see awesome forms and, you can learn much more.

Philodendrons from the tropical Americas have been collected since 1644. Most come from jungles and climb trees. Many start in the canopy from seeds and send down roots to the ground where they attach. Aerial roots are found on most Philodendrons just to take in moisture, even when they never attach to a tree or plow into the ground. Some are aquatic, and the ones most likely for us to grow are 'self-heading'. The self-headers may start out vine-like but soon develop their own top canopy and stop growing upwards.

Many Philodendrons have nectaries for symbiotic ants, but they do not develop nest holes within the plants to house the ants. Many have hydathodes, glands, at the tip of each leaf to release excess water in the leaf which causes them to have the 'crying at

night' reputation. The leaves and many parts of the plant will contain some to moderate amounts of calcium oxalate which may be somewhat toxic to dogs and cats. There have been reports of leaf chewing cats having died from the toxins.

Philodendron leaves illustrate every biology professors favorite phrase: " Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny" which means the development of the young recaptures the history of its race. In other words, infant mammals look like fish for a time, and baby Philodendron leaves never resemble the adult leaves of a given species, but resemble those of an ancestor plant.

Most Philodendrons like moisture and all require some shade. Velvety leafed forms need more shade than shiny leafed forms. Most will live in darker rooms but would thrive better nearer a bright window. Most will root from stem cuttings.

I've taken a picture from a book that is too old for copyright to show you that some love trees can have very big leaves. Now, go Google Philodendron.



Giant leaf of Philodendron speciosum

What to plant for summer

*Trees and shrubs: Yes, if you buy them in containers

*Orchids on trees: Yes, if you water daily and place them so the growing roots can grab the bark

*Vegetables: Sweet potatoes will be ok. You might also try snap beans and okra. Plant the okra in Promix, the soil nematodes here will kill it otherwise. To co-plant the okra with marigolds may let you use regular soil. Marigolds are supposed to drive nematodes away. I always bury shrimp shells in beds where nematodes may cause harm. Don't even think about planting tomatoes.

*Flowering annuals: marigolds, salvia, and portulaca can tolerate our sun, but to be safe, try to provide some afternoon shade. Of course you can plant coleus in the shade for some easy color.

A new stupid gardener contest. Beat me if you can?

Don't even bother to enter if you've done these common things:

1. Cooked new plants in a hot car.
2. Soaked seeds so long that you drowned the embryo. The smartest plant person I know did that.
3. Planted tomato plants in the ground, just before it snowed. You were living 'up north'.
4. Planted a 30' tree under the overhang of your roof.
5. Ask a plant seller from away whether his plant will grow or bloom here. Of course he'll say yes, but won't add: 'if you take it to Maine every summer'.
6. Thought that cute catalog plant for zone 3 would live here If you planted it in deep shade.

Here are the rules for the contest:

1. Except for knowing that I am "Contestant A", no one will learn your identity through this newsletter.
2. Entry stories should be emailed to bobdot@bellsouth before the first of each month.
3. A prize of little value will be awarded when all entries are published.

Now Contestant A's bigger dumb ideas:

I thought it would be fun to have a swamp garden. To do this I buried a couple of tubs for water lilies, dug the soil down about a foot between the tubs, put in a rubber liner, and filled the swamp with water. I next purchased iris, cat tails, and a bunch of other bog plants. What did I get? A bunch of weedy looking things that added to the perfect habitat for Buffo toads and mosquitos.

That project didn't take too long to dismantle and wasn't that expensive. I kept the water lily tubs but leaned to add fish to the water to control mosquitos.

My second dumb idea here, cost much more. I spent a year finding 12 clumping bamboo plants which averaged \$50+ each. Bamboos with blue, black, green, or gold culms thrived along the back fence of our yard. I nursed my beautiful new plants, gave them extra silicone and only cursed a little about the mess their leaves

made dropping on the grass. In about 3 years, the clumps were from 5' to 7' across and the dropped leaves were too many. Removal averaged \$100-300 a plant. I still think bamboo is very beautiful, but I enjoy looking at it when it grows elsewhere. I have no doubt that I will fail to plan ahead well again, but trying new planting ideas is half the fun?

Tree talk... mostly oaks

An Idaho study found that one tree in its life time had a value of \$2,593. This value came from cleaning the air, preventing storm water runoff and reducing energy costs by providing shade, and increasing property values. Follow along with these oak factoids:

1. An adult oak tree is estimated to have 500 million living root tips
2. In some forests, oak trees link roots and stronger oaks provide weaker trees with nutrients and water.
3. The oak is the USA's national tree. Eighty species grow here and world -wide there are 500-600 species of oaks. (South Florida is not a good habitat for many kinds of oaks, but those that do flourish here can live to be awesome.)

Parting reminders:

1. **Please bring in something for the refreshment table the month you celebrate your birthday.**
2. **Please bring plants to the meeting with pots encased in plastic bags to make clean up easier.**
3. **Please remember to wear your name badge to get a free raffle ticket when you attend our meetings.**
4. **Bring a pen to write your name on raffle tickets. This speeds raffles along.**
5. **Do enter the Dumb Gardner contest.**