

FLAMINGO GARDENS ANNOUNCES NEW CYCADS OF THE WORLD GARDEN



DAVIE, FL- Flamingo Gardens is planning a new Cycads of the World demonstration garden scheduled to open in December 2018.

Cycads are one of the most threatened plant groups in the world and face considerable conservation obstacles. *Ex situ* conservation by public gardens is vital to most cycads' long-term survival. Central to this effort is planning and building genetically appropriate cycad collections as a global safety net against plant extinction.

Cycads are also one of the most primitive plants still in existence today. Many are highly endangered requiring a unique growing environment for continued success. Flamingo Gardens is privileged to be located in a unique geographical sub-tropical/tropical area, almost nonexistent elsewhere in North America, making it possible to cultivate unusual, rare and exotic tropical cycads of the world.

Historically, the early economy of Fort Lauderdale was dependent on the production of starch from the roots of the indigenous coontie, a form of cycad. This plant provided raw material for the early settlers and food for the native peoples of the region.

More recently, cycads have played an important part of landscaping in South Florida. From the traditional Sago Palm, the popular Cardboard Palm, and even the coontie and many of the other cycad varieties, South Florida home gardens and public spaces boast a large and varied population of cycad species and types.

Flamingo Gardens has a designated area devoted to our current collection of about 75 large and mature cycads representing 50 different species. Plans are underway to generously expand the existing collection to a larger, world-class cycad demonstration garden adding another 30 rare and exceptional species, with space to add an additional 50+ species over time.

Flamingo Gardens is seeking public support to renovate the current cycad collection and expand it to include beds featuring cycads from around the tropical world- from the Caribbean, South America, Africa, Asia, and Australia. With an expanded palette of cycads, raised elevations with improved drainage and irrigation, signage and up to date curating, the Cycad Garden will develop into a distinguished world-class collection and an important part of the Gardens and destination for visitors.

A variety of cycads will be supported by existing palm trees to provide shade to species less tolerant of intense sunlight. Native orchids will be invited to adorn the middle landscape level and add a pop of exotic and periodic color to draw our visitors even closer to the beauty of the cycad world. Flamingo Gardens is working with the Horticultural Department at Florida Atlantic University on a native orchid reintroduction project to install native orchids back into the landscape in an area adjacent to the Cycad Garden. These native orchids will provide a transition from the Pioneer Walkway native plant garden into the new Cycad Garden. We are excited to combine the delicate beauty of native orchids with the strong architectural boldness of the cycads.

The expanded collection shall be integrated with the existing tram trail and Pioneer Walkway garden making it a destination for visitors and a designated stop during the narrated tram tour. Signage and walkways will connect the Pioneer Walkway to the new Cycad Garden to provide access and public education about the cycad origins.

Boulders and graceful elevation changes will compliment the scale and drama of the cycads and keep plants from excessive seasonal rainfall. Grade changes will redirect low lying areas to the smaller existing pond and a new dry stream bed. (See attached New Cycad Garden Plan.)

The existing cycad collection is situated at one of the most dramatic grade changes in the garden. The high point of the property lies on the edge of a ridge overlooking the project area. Rainfall will be captured as it cascades down the ridge between large beds of cycads and boulders into a dry stream bed, then funneled to the lowest grade and collected in a grassy depression. Visitors will access the cycad garden on a path which winds gently through the cycads and crosses a bridge over the dry stream bed, allowing them to understand the connection of water to the cycads.

The new Cycads of the World Demonstration Garden will offer much to the senses. Its aesthetic layout unites the plants into a collective story of contrasts- cycads to boulders, architectural cycads to delicate orchids, high points with vistas to low points for water collection. Visitors may view the garden on foot or by tram, for two distinctively different experiences. The Cycads of the World Demonstration Garden will be a living repository of the tropical world of cycads and a walk around the equator at Flamingo Gardens.