



NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF PALMS

Two botanical institutions with significant palm collections celebrate important anniversaries in 2009. Montgomery Botanical Center in Miami celebrates 50 years since its founding in 1959 (as the Montgomery Foundation). The original planting of its estate by Colonel Robert Montgomery began in 1932. After Col. Montgomery died in 1953, his wife remarried, taking as her husband Mr. Al Jennings. Nell Montgomery Jennings died in 1990 and left her estate and fortune to Montgomery Botanical Center that now houses one of the most important palm and cycad collections in the whole world, a collection not only of immense research interest but also of great beauty. A celebratory symposium is planned for later this year (watch the pages of PALMS for further details).

Over the other side of the Atlantic, in 1759, Princess Augusta, the mother of Britain's King George III, established her royal gardens on the banks of the river Thames in the village of Kew to the west of London. The Royal Botanic Gardens Kew has thus reached the venerable age of 250. The gardens house in the celebrated Palm House one of the most diverse indoor collections of palms anywhere in the world, but also has custody of perhaps the most significant dried reference collections of palms in its Herbarium, a collection not only rich in historic and type collections, but also in modern collections from throughout the tropics. This year also sees the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin on 12 February 1809, an anniversary to be

celebrated at Kew with an exhibition on the life of the great evolutionist to be housed in the Nash Conservatory, one of the most elegant glasshouses at Kew.

From Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden comes news of a new director whose name will be familiar to readers of PALMS. He is Dr. Carl E. Lewis, and he is a co-author of the new, second edition of *Genera Palmarum*. He is also creator of FTBG's on-line Guide to Palms. Carl has been associated with FTBG for a number of years, first as a visitor to the garden while completing his PhD at Cornell University, then as a post-doctoral researcher, later as a senior curator in the horticulture department and most recently as a palm biologist in the research department. At 35 years old, he is the youngest director in the history of FTBG. His enthusiasm for palms, palm exploration and innovative technology can only mean good things for the future of FTBG.

Another *Genera Palmarum* co-author, Dr. William Baker, of the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew has recently accepted the chairmanship of the Palm Specialist Group of the World Conservation Union and Species Survival Commission. In addition to heading the palm research program at Kew, Bill is charged with overseeing the assessment of the conservation status of the world's palm species and raising awareness for the critical need for palm conservation throughout the world.

THE EDITORS