New and Rare Plants for Florida Gardens

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“One never knows until one tries.” This old saying comes constantly into my mind when I read in my sets of “The Gardener’s Chronicle,” “The Garden,” “Garden and Forest,” “Die Gartenflora,” “Die Gartenwelt,” the “Revue Horticole,” and other gardening papers and in my books on travels and beautiful tropical plants. I have experimented largely with many plants during the past ten years, and I am surprised how many of the tropical jewels survive our rather disappointing winters, and how many flower and attain a large size. I am unable at this time to mention all the plants that are doing well, and especially those that assumed large sizes during six or seven winters, when we had no killing freezes. I shall list only a few which have proved very beautiful and valuable additions to our garden flora.

Podocarpus Nagei. This is a most beautiful dense evergreen coniferous tree from southern Japan and the Island of Formosa. A specimen in my high pine-land garden does not do very well, but on moist flat-wood soil it is a grand success. The late Mr. Edmund H. Hart of Federal Point, a man with an unlimited love and enthusiasm for exotic plants set out a specimen about thirty years ago, which has developed into one of the most exquisite trees in the State. It is now a tree about 35 feet high, pyramidal in form, very dense and of a deep-green color, showing, in the young foliage, glaucous and slightly violet lines. The coloring and its dense growth and exquisite beauty impressed my mind so deeply that the picture will never fade from my memory. The tree was somewhat mutilated as some of the lower drooping branches had been cut away by a careless colored laborer, but even as it was the specimen was a picture of unique and exquisite beauty. I have never seen a more refined and a nobler coniferous tree. It grows on very rich moist black soil near the St. Johns river. In fact the soil is so moist that it had to be ditched all around. It is perfectly hardy all over Florida.

Araucaria Bidwillii. Bunya-Bunya. Australian Monkey Puzzle. This is by no means a new tree, but it is extremely rare in our gardens. With a little protection it is hardy as far north as Jacksonville. Mr. C. D. Mills of that city sent me a photograph of his fine specimen growing in the open. It has the benefit of rather high buildings towards the north and west. The finest, and noblest specimen, however, is found in the Carpenter garden of Orlando, where also some tall specimens of tree ferns (Alsophila aus-
the wind moves the masses of foliage the contrast of the deep green and silvery white is very striking. The flowers, in form hand-shaped, appeared in great numbers. Their color was creamy white and they were very interesting. As I had only female plants, the fruits did not ripen. A friend of mine who had seen this species in the West Indies and in Panama, its native home, said that he had never seen such large and beautiful specimens there. This Cecropia does not naturally grow dense. There are only a number of large boughs, and the large palmate leaves are clustered at their ends. The trunk contains a sweetish milky sap, and the sap suckers on their way northward usually girdle the big boughs with circles of holes.

_Ficus Nymphæafolia._ Water-lily-leaved Rubber Tree. About thirty years ago I received from Haaget. Schmidt, Erfurt, Germany, a most beautiful rubber tree under the above name. I planted it out in my high pine land garden and the specimen last year had attained a height of 30 feet with a dense and most beautiful crown. It is a jewel amongst tropical evergreen trees. The leaves are very large and their form reminds one of some of the water lilies. They are so glossy that they appear as if they had been varnished. The species is, however, a very tender one. A few degrees of cold kill the beautiful leaves, and in drying and curling up they exhale a most delicious tonka bean fragrance. This Ficus is a most valuable tree for south Florida, say south of Punta Gorda. It requires rich soil and it grows as well on light pineland as in the moist flatwoods.
and in hammock soil. I had a fine collection of rubber trees prior to the freeze of February, 1917, and there were large specimens of the common rubber tree (Ficus elastica) and of the large-leaved Ficus pandurata in Orlando but all were killed outright by a temperature falling as low as 20°F.

**Ficus Pandurata.** This large-leaved rubber tree is one of the finest and most massive of all tropical trees. It was brought to this country about fifteen years ago by Henry A. Dreer of Philadelphia. Being a native of Kamerun, West Africa, it is very tender and can only be planted successfully in extreme south Florida. There are some fine and very large fruiting specimens at Fort Myers. The leaves are densely clustered on the many branches. They are fiddle-shaped or banjo-shaped and over a foot long and of a dark glossy green color.

**Ficus Altiissima.** This Indian species, much more beautiful and elegant and much more graceful than F. elastica, should be planted in all ornamental gardens of south Florida, where fine tropical show trees are appreciated. It requires much room for its full development. There is a most beautiful specimen with an immense broad crown in Mrs. McAdoo’s garden at Punta Gorda, which annually bears its bright red fruit, in size like a cherry and relished by the birds.

**Ficus Retusa.** (*F. nitida*) The “Cuban Laurel.” Not, however, a laurel and not a native of Cuba but of tropical Asia and Malaya. The dense foliage is small, of a very delightful green, and the tree is one of the most beautiful that can be imagined. There is a fine dense specimen in one of the gardens at Punta Gorda. It is rare, but it should be planted largely in south Florida as an avenue tree and in ornamental grounds. I have planted all these species and many others in my new garden at Naples-on-the-Gulf. I have there *F. rubiginosa* (*F. australis*), another rather small-leaved species from Australia; *F. macrophylla*, according to Ferdinand von Mueller, perhaps the grandest of Australian avenue trees; *F. afzelii* of tropical Africa; *F. palmata (?)* and *F. padifolia*, a new and most beautiful species, introduced by the Bureau of Plant Industry of Washington, through Mr. Carlos Werckle from Costa Rica. Mr. Werckle says that “this is very different from the rest of the genus in its being of superb form. It is a very large and very dense tree of exceptionally beautiful color, and is evergreen. Nearly all the other species are bare for a longer or shorter time during the dry season. Very much liked by birds and always full of little parrots. Fruit and leaves very small. One of the most beautiful tropical trees.” I have two small promising plants of this species.

**Cowoupita Guianensis.** Cannon-ball Tree. A fine tropical tree with large evergreen leaves and clusters of large pinkish-white flowers. The large cannon-ball shaped fruits, very hard shelled and of a grayish brown color, hang down from the trunk and main boughs. Though a native of Guiana it is perfectly hardy in extreme south Florida. There is a fine large fruiting specimen in the grounds of the Royal Palm Hotel at Fort
Myers. The species was introduced by Reasoner Bros. many years ago.

Mr. John Soar, Little River, Florida, has a very large and dense live oak in his grounds which is a veritable air garden overgrown with hundreds of orchids, bromeliads, ferns and cacti. It is a sight to see and worthy of a long journey to admire it. This epiphytal growth reminds one of a fairy scene and should be imitated wherever these plants are hardy. I cannot refrain from giving a list of the epiphytes growing on this live oak.

**Orchids:** Epidendrum Tampense; E. anceps; E. rigidum; E. nocturnum; E. cochlæatum; E. sp., species from Bahamas; E. Boothianum; E. sp.; Oncidium luridum; O. luridum, var.; O. spathelatum; Polystachya luteola; Macradenia lutescens; Cyrtopodium punctatum; Dendrobium nobile; Cattleya Trianae; Vanilla planifolia; V. Eggersii.

**Bromeliads:** Catopsis nutans; C. sp.; Billbergia sp.; Guzmania monostachya; Hohenbergia pendulata; Tillandsia usneoides; T. caespitosa; T. utriculata; T. bracteata; and three other unidentified species of Tillandsia

**Ferns:** Polypodium incanum; P. aureum.

**Aroids:** Pothos aurea.

**Cacti:** Cereus grandiflorus; C. nycticus; C. triangularis.

**Other Plants:** Peperomia magnoliifolia; P. leptostachya; Thunbergia alba.

Most of the plants are natives. There are hundreds of fine foliaged and beautiful flowering Bromeliads from the West Indies, Mexico and Central America, Brazil and the Andes that can be grown very successfully on the trunks and large limbs of live oaks, such as the many species of Aechmea, Caragnata, Guzmania, Billbergia, Tillandsia, Nidularium, and Vriesea. I am now experimenting largely with these Bromeliads and also with Aroids. The Bromeliads will thrive on rough bark trees in south Florida. They should be made quite as much a specialty as orchids. I am sure any one getting a collection of these together will reap as much pleasure from them as from orchids; and perhaps more so, for the majority are exceedingly ornamental even when not in flower. We have about fifteen to twenty wild species in the State, all exceedingly interesting plants, and many of them very beautiful. Even the man not particularly interested in plants is struck by the beauty, size, symmetry and gracefulness of the “Wild Pines” or “Air Plants,” found particularly in rich hammock woods and in cypress swamps, nestled upon the trunks or thick boughs of the trees. In many cases whole limbs are covered with dense masses of young seedlings. The large growing species like Tillandsia utriculata, T. aloifolia and Catopsis nutans are frequently collected and sold as curiosities to northern tourists. Though highly interesting as graceful and handsome plants, many of the tropical species outrival our native species in beauty and stateliness by far. The leaves of many of the tropical species are highly colored, red, yellow, white, blackish, and brown. Their form quite frequently is vase-like, holding water in the center, which again collects parts of old leaves and particularly insects which form part of the nourishment of the plant. All of them are epiphytes growing on the
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trunks of forest trees, and some are found on rocks.

A large representative collection which I received from the Garfield Park Conservatories at Chicago, Ill., many of them not to be had in duplicatés, was destroyed by the Florida Plant Board—a body that makes every scientific research in acclimatizing new and rare tropical plants impossible. Previous to the rulings of this wise body of men, I had received a collection of Bromeliads from other sources and from the Bureau of Plant Industry in Washington. These invariably did well and some species formed large clumps within a few years. I can only mention a few of the very best: Nidularium amazonicum with vasiform, brownish-green leaf-rosettes; N. Innocentii, with leaves more or less tinged with brown; N. fulgens, with light green leaves which are spotted with darker green; N. spectabilis, a very beautiful species, which stands the cold here at Gotha. The leaves are green, tinged with brown and marbled on the back with transverse bands of reddish-brown; each leaf is tipped with bright red. Cryptanthus zonatus, a beautiful small foliage plant, bright emerald green, beautifully cross-barred with brownish-white; C. Beuckeri and C. bivittatus, also fine small foliage plants. Aechmea fulgens with bright green leaves, and its variety A. fulgens discolor, with bright claret brown all over the lower surface; A. Weilbachi, A. miniata and its variety discolor with deep red leaves on its lower surface; A. aurantiaca, A. Mariae-Reginae, a large and beautiful plant; and many others. The genus consists of about 150 distinct species, all of them very beautiful. Billbergia vittata, B. thrysoidea, B. zebrina, B. speciosa, B. Morellii, B. mutans, B. Porteana, and others have all proved hardy here in ordinary winters. All are epiphytes and can be grown on trees. Caraguata luiguata and its variety cardinalis with bright red leaves; C. musaïca with a beautiful rosette of green leaves, banded copiously on the back with fine wavy lines of red-brown on a purple tinted green ground. Guzmania tricolor and its form variegata, found wild in extreme south Florida. The genus Tillandsia is well represented in Florida by quite a number of species. The gem of the gems is T. Lindenii with its beautiful blue flowers. There are about 250 different species found in tropical America. Vriesea carinata (V. brachystachys) is a gorgeous flowering plant with dazzling red bracts remaining long in good condition; it flowers in winter; V. splendens, a rather tender species, with leaves of a bright green color, distinctly marked with cross-bands of purplish-black; V. psittaciana; V. tessellata, and V. fenestralis with beautiful red, green, and yellowish striped and cross-banded or tessellated leaves; V. heiroglyphica with large band-like leaves, cross-barred with deep purplish-black; V. Sandersii (Euchiolirion Sandersii) has beautiful glaucous green leaves, spotted with claret-brown on the back. All come from tropical America, and are easily established on large shady trees in south Florida. I have grown most of my plants very successfully in pots. The pot should be filled up to one-third with pot-shreds and the compost used is fibrous
peat, some fern roots, charcoal, leaf mold and sphagnum moss. Mr. Theo. L. Mead has succeeded in naturalizing the beautiful little *Tillandsia ionantha* from Mexico in his woods. It is one of the pigmies of the family. As the family consists of about 1,000 distinct species and almost all of them are interesting, it is not an easy task to supply a satisfactory list. I have fastened most of the species I have in my collection to the trunks of cabbage palmettoes on my new place at Naples, and all are doing well.

Gotha, Fla.