



Another Fall to Remember

Author: Jeremy Evanchesky

Just over a year after the giant crowd of palm and cycad lovers gathered in Longwood for the meeting at Neal Ekengren and Alex Steeg's respective gardens, Graeme Phillipson invited us to enjoy a tour of his garden near Downtown Orlando and Leu Gardens on the opposite side of the parking lot we lovingly call Interstate 4. The home was remodeled in 2021 and has a gorgeous outdoor kitchen and patio area near that pool that is complemented by large *Archontophoenix*, *Livistona*, and dozens of complementary plantings that give the garden a finished, defined look.

The forecast in the days approaching the meeting was rather ominous. An 80% chance of rain throughout the day on Saturday eventually gave way to a forecast that was more amenable to a meeting. The forecast for the day of the meeting was a 90°F+ day, with plenty of sunshine until 2pm, then increasing chances of rain thereafter. As the folks who ventured to Leu Gardens after the formal portion of the meeting could tell you, it started raining shortly after 2PM.

The formal garden tour started after a short introduction by Dave Hall at the front of the house. The first palms on the tour were a pair of Foxtail Palms (*Wodyetia bifurcata*) that were the first palms planted by the property owner. As folks wound around the path on the left side of the house, folks were treated to a diverse selection of palms that included *Satakentia liukuensis* and the Blountstown Dwarf variant of *Sabal minor*. A trio of newly added *Livistona decora* anchored the garden bed visible after crossing through the gate to the backyard.

The pool area is shielded from wind by large bamboo canes from the property next door. In this area, the *Archontophoenix* and other tender species were able to survive what was a fatal weather event in many other locations. All of the garden beds were mulched and manicured with perfect edges. Look as hard as you wanted, there were no weeds visible in any of the garden beds. Graeme spent the time between the end of the formal tour answering questions.

Lunch was served from 4Rivers BBQ in Winter Park just after noon. The crowd of approximately 60 attendees were able to eat as much as they wanted and still left plenty of leftovers. The auction featured plentiful donations, providing challenges for even seasoned growers to describe some of the species. The conclusion of the meeting included announcements about the upcoming meetings, a special cycad purchase supported by the society, and our other upcoming events. Everyone was encouraged to take leftovers and pay one last visit to the vendors on their way to their cars.

A small group of attendees decided to extend their day at Leu Gardens after the visit. The trip through the garden was entertaining and informative but eventually gave way to heavy rain. Either way, it was a great day to be a palm and cycad lover. We look forward to seeing everyone at future events! Stay tuned!



The tour starts at the front of the yard near the vendor area.



The group advances toward the back yard while vendors get their plants ready for the sale.



We three kings...



Auction plants get a good look over from prospective bidders.



4Rivers BBQ catered for a wonderful lunch!

Additional Links and Information

Holiday Meeting 2026:

- Saturday, December 5th, 2026, 10:00AM-2:00PM
- 1 Earring Point, Vero Beach, FL 32963

Fall Meeting 2026: <https://palmtalk.org/topic/93849-central-florida-palm-cycad-society-fall-2026-meeting/>

Rob Branch Labor Day Recap:

http://www.cfpacs.com/org/wp-content/uploads/publications/2026/20260907_RobBranchSaleRecap.pdf

Lakeland Garden Club Presentation:

http://www.cfpacs.com/org/wp-content/uploads/publications/2026/20260915_LakelandGardenClubPresentation.pdf