

# 2007



CLUSIA LANCEOLATA

## Plants of the Year

It is no small feat to choose which new or older but underused plants to highlight and bring to your attention each year. After much deliberation, we are pleased to announce this year's winners: *Clusia lanceolata*, a shrub with charming flowers that's rarely seen in landscapes; *Cryosophila stauracantha*, a beautiful palm with root spines and silvery undersides to its palmate leaves; and *Neoregelia* 'Fireball,' well-known to bromeliad lovers but worthy of a much larger audience because of its striking color and growth habit.

Here are the horticultural characteristics, a description for each plant, and plot numbers where you can find these plants in the landscape at Fairchild.

When you visit the Garden, make it a point to look at the 2007 Plant of the Year winners. We hope you will agree each plant offers unique characteristics, color and form and would enhance most garden landscapes.

### Plants of the Year 2007 Committee

Martha Kent (Chairman), Mary Collins, Mike Davenport, Marilyn Griffiths, Christie Jones, Ken Neugent and Jason Lopez

### *Clusia lanceolata*

**Family:** Clusiaceae

**Native to:** Brazil

**Habit:** Evergreen shrub to small tree, 8-10 feet

**Flower:** Showy white waxy flowers with wine-red centers to 2 inches across. Blooms year round

**Growing conditions:** Well-drained soil in full to part sun. Average water requirements. Coastal shrub, salt and drought tolerant

**Propagation:** Seed and cuttings

**Comments:** Leathery, lanceolate leaves are about 3 inches long. Dioecious (plants have either male or female flowers). A great container plant

**Where to find it at Fairchild:** Plot 49

*Clusia lanceolata* is a delightful shrub or small tree from the sandy coastal regions of Brazil known as restingas. Companions to the *Clusia* in these areas are mangroves, palms, bromeliads and cacti.

*C. lanceolata* was introduced to South Florida by noted USDA researcher and Fairchild Research Assistant Alan Meerow.



It is closely related to the autograph tree, *C. rosea*. Well adapted to our growing conditions, it thrives in sun or partial shade with minimal irrigation requirements. The white, waxy six-petaled flowers have a distinctive ring of wine-red markings towards the center. These 2" wide flowers appear year-round. The distinctive fruits which follow are round and crowned with a circle of black glands. When ripe, the fruit opens to disclose seeds with orange-red arils.

This shrub, an excellent landscape addition to any garden, can be maintained as a smaller specimen with judicious pruning, or allowed to fill a larger space. As a container plant, it provides a unique highlight to a patio collection.

## *Cryosophila stauracantha*

**Family:** Arecaceae

**Common names:** root spine palm; give and take palm

**Native to:** Mexico, Guatemala, Belize

**Habit:** Medium sized, solitary palm to about 30 feet. Dark green palmate leaves with silver undersides

**Flower:** Inflorescence 2 to 3 feet long, bearing many small white flowers

**Growing conditions:** Part shade in well-drained soil

**Propagation:** Seed

**Comments:** Short, gray root spines appear at the base as palm matures, adding character to its trunk

**Where to find it at Fairchild:** Plots 112, 133, 143

Of the nine or so species of root spine palms, *Cryosophila stauracantha* is our favorite. It is certainly the most cold-hardy



*CRYOSOPHILA STAURACANTHA* AT MONTGOMERY BOTANICAL CENTER

member of the genus, and has proven very easy to grow in South Florida. The palmate leaves are exceptionally silver on the undersides and a deep green above. The curious spines that grow along the stem are actually modified roots; however, their function is not fully understood. It grows naturally in lowland rainforest in Guatemala and dry forest in Mexico, making it a versatile landscaping subject. It can tolerate full sun, but looks best in light shade. Like most palms, it requires good drainage. The root spine palm is a moderate to fast grower, eventually reaching 30 feet in height. The beautiful inflorescences are pendulous with loads of creamy-white flowers. Mature fruit are white.

## *Neoregelia 'Fireball'*

**Family:** Bromeliaceae

**Common names:** Fireball

**Native to:** Brazil

**Habit:** Glossy maroon leaves in a rosette, 6-8" across and 4-6" tall; clustering; stoloniferous (bearing reproductive shoots)

**Flower:** Purple with whitish edges

**Growing conditions:** Can be grown as an epiphyte, lithophyte or terrestrial; 4-5 hours of full sun for best color

**Propagation:** Offsets

**Comments:** A terrific plant for attaching to trees or rocks, hanging in baskets or growing in a mulched bed

**Where to find it at Fairchild:** Plots 117 in oak, 118 on rock and on palm, 130 high up on oak branches

*Neoregelia 'Fireball'* is a small undescribed species with deep maroonish-red foliage that forms rosettes 6-8" across and 4-6" tall. Introduced into cultivation by Nat DeLeon in the early 1960s, it is one of the easiest bromeliads to grow. Plants placed in four to five hours of full sun will develop maximum color. During dry periods, water twice per month.

Fireball is not known for its flower because it rarely blooms. In fact, it could be years before you see a flower. Stolons (above-ground reproductive shoots) with new plants are produced rapidly and a single plant ultimately grows into a large mass. Whether *N. 'Fireball'* is climbing up a tree, hanging off a branch, scrambling over rocks or creeping across mulch, this splash of wine-red color will add a dramatic focal point to your garden.

*NEOREGELIA 'FIREBALL'*

