

# The Cycad Newsletter

ISSN: 2998-7253  
Vol. 45 No. 1 2025

Journal of the Cycad Society - Dedicated to the Conservation of Cycads through Education & Scientific Research



*Ceratozamia kuesteriana*



# Cycads and wildfire: Amazing survivors

Dale Motiska

dale@palmislandnursery.com

August 20, 2020 sweeping over the hillsides from the east and the west, tornado winds of a wall of wildfire were bearing down on my garden sparing no mercy in its pathways of destruction. The ensuing flames consumed several hundred thousand acres across the span of land as far as the eye could see. Lightning strikes were Mother Nature's fury on the unsuspected. It was a blessing that my home was spared the fate of everything else on my property. Fire break roadways and a lush garden around my swimming pool added to the blessings. Any dried frond, bamboo stalk or dry wood became fuel for the fury. Most of the gardens palms

were spared but now with charcoal trunks. The running bamboo began sprouting the very next day. The palms pushed new crowns in short order. This story is about the amazing resilience of ALL of my cycads. 100% recovery! The plastic buckets on several of my smaller cycads melted and the soil crystalized. I repotted them with new soil and they regrew new leaves in the spring. One important factor was consistent watering immediately after the damage. Incidentally the annual rainfall that winter was a record dry spell with only 9 inches of rain recorded. Attached is a list of species and several of my comments.

*Ceratozamia kuesteriana*: Defoliated and flushed the next spring.

*Ceratozamia hildae*: All came back

*Ceratozamia latifolia*: All came back to normal conditions

*Ceratozamia mexicana* 'Mulango': Defoliated and sprouted 8 months later.

*Ceratozamia mexicana* 'Tuxtla': Defoliated 8 months later. (I worried about these as they were the last to flush).

*Cycas revoluta*: A few burned and flushed crowns within 60 days

*Cycas panzhihauensis*: One within 20 feet of the inferno garage flushed 3 weeks later

*Cycas pectinata*: Defoliated and flushed in 100 days

*Cycas taitungensis*: Defoliated and flushed within 90 days. One sent up a male cone 30 days later

*Cycas debaoensis* X *panzhihauensis*: Not burned

*Dioon edule*: All defoliated and flushed in 120 days

*Dioon angustifolium*: All defoliated and flushed in 120 days

*Dioon holmgrenii*: Not burned

*Dioon mejiae*: Flushed 2 years later

## Donate to the Cycad Society and Support Cycad Research!

If you would like to help support cycad research, please consider donating to the Cycad Society. We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, so all donations are deductible to the fullest extent of the law. We also support education, but unless specified, all donated funds will go to fund cycad research. Please help us fund the next generation of cycad researchers and other important research to help make sure cycads survive on planet earth!

Contact Treasurer Garrie Landry with your tax-deductable donations: garrie@cox.net





Images:  
The fire coming over the ridge to our property (left).

*Macrozamia johnsonii* two days after the fire (bottom left) and the same plant one year after the fire (bottom right).



## Historic Cycad Society Newsletters now for sale!

The Cycad Society has made available historic issues of the newsletter. These are filled with tons of great and currently relevant information. If you know of any institutional libraries that may be interested in complete sets, please let Newsletter Editor Shayla Salzman know at [shayla.salzman@uga.edu](mailto:shayla.salzman@uga.edu).

For purchase, please visit: [https://www.ebay.com/user/cycad-shayla](https://www.ebay.com/usr/cycad-shayla) Annual packages will become available on a rolling basis. Funds will support the society's conservation and research grants.

