

The Cycad Newsletter

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Macrozamia elegans

Grower notes from the field:

A cycad orgy

Dale Motiska

dale@palmislandnursery.com

In 1997 I was fortunate enough to acquire several seedlings of *Cycas panzhihuaensis* from my good friend Danny Shook. They grew quickly in 2 gallon pots. I planted them out on a mound for drainage in the open. After several nights of light frost, I recorded a low temperature of 20 degrees F, but there was no damage on the little plants. The cycads were good size 15 gallon pots with 10" caudexes by 2002. Two of the plantings reached maturity in 2014. Good fortune was mine to have a male and a female plant. The orgy will have to wait for the time being however, as this will be good clean sex between the King and the Queen! Their seed was spread across the land. Scores of their offspring are now teenagers looking for homes.

Now on to the orgy. In 2015 Mr. *Cycas taitingensis* comes along. He likes Queen Panzhi and it is decided for them to produce a new variant of their offspring. They are proud parents because they have bred the qualities of the speedy growth and green color of Mr. T with the hardiness and fast growth of Queen P. Now the King still stands tall and is ready for action. Cone pollen test- tap tap – yes, good to go! Low and behold there's a Queen *Revoluta* from another *Cycas* tribe beholding the seed cone in readiness for a King. But there is another King, Mr. T! He is ready for action and the orgy begins. It is decided that Queen *Revoluta* is too slow and makes too many pups and bulbils. With good food there will be 3 flushes a year for the offspring's growth. Their children grew fast with different colorations. There was the deep green, silver green and silver colors that the brothers and sisters shared.

So as the story goes, more and more children from the different tribes have reached maturity. There is a new couple that have arrived. A King male named *Cycas panzhihuaensis* X *debaensis*

and a Queen of the same name. It has been said that their beauty is incomparable to others of similar tribes because of their bifurcated leaflets and super hybrid growth speed and hardiness. Boom boom and their seed is now ready for fertile ground. The mature seed is yellow with green tones rather than the orange color of many of the other *Cycas* species.

Allas, many of the males and females miss each other. Timing is everything. If the King's cone is ready with no Queen cones in readiness, remove the King's cone (sorry buddy), store it in a paper bag in the produce section of your refrigerator. The pollen will keep for a fair amount of time waiting for the Queen to be ready or send it to our pollen bank. Our society has Queens in waiting. Different cycad species can be bred with different methods. Dealing with *Ceratozamia* female cones I find it necessary to cut off the top two inches of the cone with a sharp knife (an applesieatome). Then I shake in the pollen and put the cut cap back on the female cone (no stitches required). Voila! Offspring!

Cycads are such beautiful plants with smaller statures that easily fit in the smaller yards of today. I see so many *Cycas revoluta* everywhere as I drive around California neighborhoods. It is a fact – people like cycads. It is up to our membership to strengthen a "new ecology" where many of these rare plants can be reproduced and planted in gardens in their growing zones.

So don't tell your friends that you are having an orgy. They might think you are kinky (they already know that you're a nerd). We should keep this little secret between us as only our members can really relate to the excitement shared with this kind of orgy. Boom boom!



Queen Panzhi - *Cycas panzhihuaensis* ovulate cone in the author's garden

King Panzhi - *Cycas panzhihuaensis* pollen cone in the author's garden





Cycas panzhihuaensis
x debaoensis ovulate
cone in the author's
garden

Cycas panzhihuaensis x
debaoensis leaf detail



Cycas panzhihuaensis x
debaoensis seeds



Seeds from *Cycas panzihuaensis* x *debaoensis* crossed with another *Cycas panzihuaensis* x *debaoensis* showing the bright yellow color

Cycas revoluta ovulate plant with two pollen cones resting on it.

