

# The Codiaeum Connection

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November 2009



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# **Croton Society News**

## **Upcoming Meeting**

**Saturday, December 5th, 2009**

Our next meeting will be hosted by Phil Stager at his home in St Pete, FL

Address: 4184 51st Avenue South, St. Pete, FL 33711

Time: 11AM—1PM

Cold beverages and a light lunch will be served following the garden tour. After lunch a plant auction/sale will take place, with all proceeds to benefit the Croton Society. Please bring at least one plant for this event.

**RSVP to Phil by Saturday, November 28th - 727-864-1588 or email: PStager@tampabay.rr.com.**

As we move into our 11th year as the Croton Society, we can marvel at some of the accomplishments that are evident. Over the years, many great friendships have blossomed and many crotons have been shared. Previously, some members had voiced an interest in having addresses published in the membership list. The majority opposed such information to be made public. In an article in this current newsletter, you will see why the majority did not want this information published. See (article on page 15 of the newsletter). This seems to be the first 'documented' incident of this nature happening to a society member and hopefully it can set the stage for all to be aware of the importance of other's property.

Next year, the Florida State Fair will be from February 4—15, 2010. Jack Roberts will be the team leader for this years display. If you would like to volunteer with ideas, plants, helping set up, caring for the plants throughout the display time, please call him at 863-868-6525 or email him at JARLJR42@GMAIL.COM



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Connie H., The Croton B\_\_\_\_\_ and Judy Glock, The Croton W\_\_\_\_\_ checking out the donated plants for the upcoming auction. :)

# Dolins

## GARDEN CENTER

525-3434

*Helping Our Neighbors  
With Their  
Gardening Spirit!*

801 - 62nd Avenue N. • St. Petersburg

### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Sandy Ball—Rockledge, FL  
 Jerry Behan—Deerfield Beach, FL  
 David Currie—Tamarac, FL  
 D'Ann Ford-Brown—Jupiter, FL  
 Jeff Gilchrist—Bradenton, FL  
 Arlene Hoskins—Yorba Linda, CA  
 Ben Jefferies—Melbourne, FL  
 Radha Kanuri—Odessa, FL  
 Ron Kiefert—Coral Gables, FL  
 Jessica McLeary—Southwest Ranches, FL  
 Andres Olivera—Tampa, FL

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## ATTENTION

The 2010 Family Living Competition Rules & Entry Forms are **NOW** available on our website:  
[www.floridastatefair.com](http://www.floridastatefair.com)

From Menu on Top Choose: State Fair  
 >Competitions  
 >Under Family Living Competitions  
 choose the division you want.

Please read the General Rules for new categories, changes & dates for the 2010 Fair.  
 (Books will not be mailed.)

**\*\*ENTRY FORM DEADLINE:  
 DECEMBER 11, 2009\*\***



Florida State Fair Authority  
 Family Living  
 PO Box 11766  
 Tampa, FL 33680

NON PROFIT ORG  
 US POSTAGE  
 PAID  
 TAMPA FL  
 PERMIT 2494

2\*1\*\*\*\*\*3-DIGIT 336  
 THE CROTON SOCIETY  
 PO BOX 24892  
 TAMPA FL 33623-4892

If you do not have access to the Internet, please contact the Family Living Dept. at (813) 627-4216 so that we may provide you with the appropriate information.

## The Croton Society Inc.

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# *USF Fall Croton Fiesta Sale Was a Big Success*

By: Connie Hoerstgen

Arriving Saturday morning, I was amazed at how many different varieties of Crotons were available for sale at the USF Botanical Gardens. I knew that Harold Lee (aka Lee) and Ron Parlett were busy propagating plant material for this sale, but never in my wildest imagination would I have guessed just how much. This was confirmed when our members, also our biggest customers, scooped up their precious beauties in a buying frenzy. There were so many rare varieties that just blew everyone away. There were over 500 plants available for sale. Not to mention there were still many plants that were not brought over yet. There were roughly 350 three gallon plants and 150 one gallon plants available for sale. Wow! this truly was a great event for everyone.

I would also like to thank the members who donated plants for the sale: Bob & Peck Pope, Jeff & Andrea Searle, Judy & Jim Glock, Toby Rose, Jack Roberts and Mark Peters. If I've excluded anyone, it's only because it was so busy I may have missed you. The society appreciates all donations.





## Lakeland, FL Highlights

The Croton Society's meeting on August 15th was hosted by Joann Woods at her beautiful home in Lakeland, FL. Everyone enjoyed the barbeque, with a special thank you to her son for helping with all of the cooking. There was a very nice variety of plants which were auctioned off that brought in another \$300 into the treasury. Thank you again Joann for hosting the meeting and thank you to all the members who joined us and donated plants for this event.





## Boca Raton Highlights

The Croton Society's meeting on October was hosted by Karen and Ricky Ginsburg at their beautiful home and garden in Boca Raton. Ricky's famous Boca Beans were just as awesome as imagined. Jeff Searle did it again! Knowing just how to play one member against the other for some very rare plants. The auction brought another \$800 into the treasury and three new members joined our group. Thank you again Ricky and Karen for all your hospitality. Thank you to all the members who joined us and donated plants for this event.





# Boca Raton Highlights





# ***Queen Elizabeth Botanical Gardens***

By: Andrew Guthrie



Officially opened by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II on February 27, 1994, the Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park is a 65-acre botanical garden and nature preserve. Located in the district of North Side in the east-central part of Grand Cayman, the Botanic Park showcases native Caymanian flora and beautiful exotics from around the world. Forty five acres of the Botanic Park is a nature preserve with a 0.8 mile walking trail which traverses several natural habitats including swamp, dry thorn-scrub thicket and woodland dominated by the native mahogany trees. Approximately 60% of the plants native to Grand Cayman can be found growing naturally in the Botanic Park

The Botanic Park is also home to many of Grand Cayman's native animals including an endemic sub-species of the Cuban Parrot which is known as the Cayman Parrot, and the highly endangered Cayman Blue Iguana which is native only to the eastern end of Grand Cayman. The National Trust for the Cayman Islands has brought this rare iguana back from the brink of extinction through their breeding and reintroduction facility located in the Botanic Park. Today over 40 Cayman Blue Iguanas can be seen roaming the grounds of the Botanic Park while hundreds more have either been released in other protected spots or are waiting for release.





# ***Queen Elizabeth Botanical Gardens***

*Continued*

The Botanic Park works closely with the Cayman Islands Orchid Society on a variety of projects. The Orchid Society has an orchid propagation lab located in the Botanic Park nursery where Society members propagate rare and endangered native orchids from seed for reintroduction in protected locations such as the Botanic Park. The Society also has its own shade house in the Park where native orchids are housed after being rescued from development sites while they await relocation to protected areas. Currently the Botanic Park and Orchid Society are developing a brand new orchid garden.

A series of gardens have been developed while others wait for funding. The Heritage Garden is a recreation of a traditional Cayman sand garden with a 120-year old Caymanian cottage as the central focal point. This garden features traditional ornamental plants, including crotons; traditional medicinal plants, fruit trees and crops.

The Floral Color Garden is a 2 ½ acre garden featuring tropical ornamentals from all over the world in a series of color themed gardens (red garden, blue garden, orange garden, etc.). Crotons feature prominently in the Color Garden, especially in the red, orange and yellow sections. The Floral Color Garden overlooks a 3-acre lake which is an excellent place to view native aquatic birds.

The new Palm Garden nears completion and features over 80 species of palms including Cayman's three native palms: *Thrinax radiata*, *Roystonea regia* and the endemic *Coccothrinax proctorii* which is known as the Silver Thatch Palm.

Crotons have always featured prominently in the landscaped areas of the Botanic Park. Many in the collection were collected as cuttings from established plants from around the island and as a result no one knew their correct cultivar names. Other crotons were purchased from local nurseries (all imported from Florida) and few were labeled as to their variety names. In 1998, 28 named varieties were acquired from Dr. Frank Brown to add to the collections. With donated funds, the Botanic Park is now properly labeling most of the plants in the gardens including the crotons, and the Botanic Park greatly appreciates Harold Lee's help in identifying the unnamed cultivars and confirming the names of those which we were pretty sure were correctly identified.

Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park  
367 Botanic Road, North Side  
P.O. Box 203  
Grand Cayman KY1-1701  
Cayman Islands  
345-947-9462  
345-947-7873 fax  
[www.botanic-park.ky](http://www.botanic-park.ky)

Open daily from 9:00 am to 5:30 pm with last admission at 4:30 pm.





## **Croton ID.....**



### **CROTON CULTIVARS**

#### **Left photo:**

Top row, left, 'Van Buren'; right, 'Harvest Moon'.

Middle row, left, 'B. Comte' (Indian Blanket); right, 'Daisy Ortega'.

Bottom row, left, 'Stoplight'; right, 'Colonel Bob Bullock'.

#### **Right photo:**

Top row, left, 'L. M. Rutherford'; right, 'Irene Kingsley'.

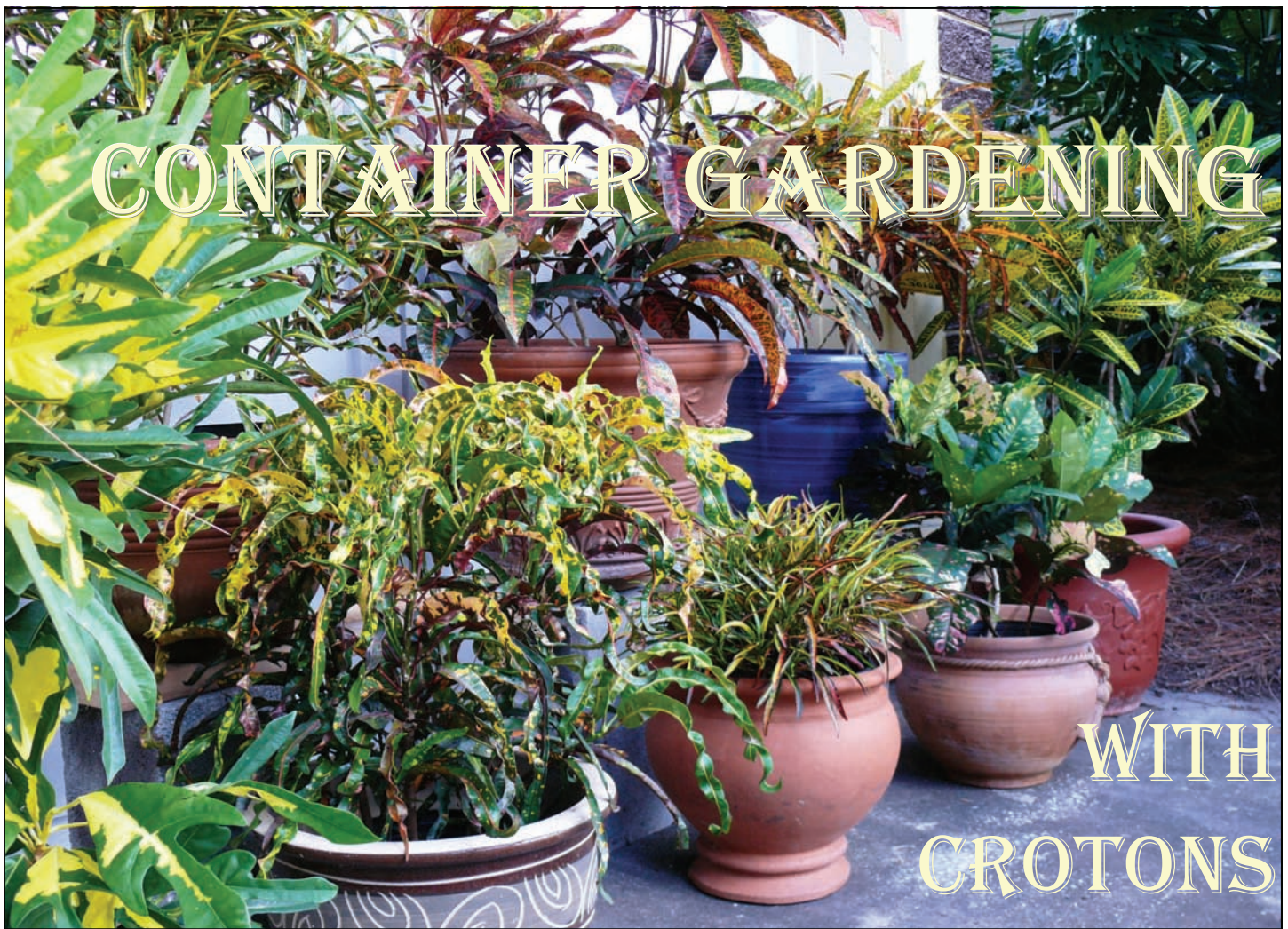
Middle row, left, 'McKenzie King'; right, 'Reedii'.

Bottom row, left, 'Baron James De Rothschild' (Bermuda Red); right, 'Madame Fernand Kohl'.

*Reprinted from Crotons in Hawaii*

*University of Hawaii Cooperative Extension Service, Circular #433*





**By Perry Edge**

I never intended to grow a lot of Crotons in containers; but a while ago, a neighbor gave me a number of decorative pots, and I had to find a use for them. Rather than go on a plant buying spree, I experimented with using some Crotons on hand which I had propagated and were still in nursery pots, and found to my surprise that container gardening was easier than I ever thought. Sometimes a Croton collector doesn't want — or isn't able to — plant Crotons in the ground. The alternative is to grow them in containers, and I'd like to share some tips for doing this type of gardening.

One of the best advantages to growing Crotons in containers is that it gives you great flexibility in how you use these plants in your garden, deck, patio, porch or balcony. Tired of a Croton in one spot? No problem to move it if it's in a container. And, you can revive a popular custom from a bygone era and use a Croton indoors as a houseplant. Another advantage of having a Croton in a container is that you can bring it inside if damaging cold weather is anticipated, but in so doing, be careful not to import any lizards, tree frogs or other critters into your home as I did!

One of the negative things you may hear about container gardening is that you have to keep re-potting the plant into bigger pots, until you have a pot so big and heavy that it looks absurd, and is very difficult to move. Plus, it's no secret that large ornamental pots are *expensive*. But it is my experience that by using a few tricks, you can keep on trucking with the same plant in the same pot for an indefinite period, even years. For example, I have had a *Picasso's Paintbrush* in a concrete pot for many years, and it has survived major pruning and even two air layers. You may think that for container gardening you have to restrict yourself to small-leaved, very slow-growing Crotons such as the aforementioned *Paintbrush* or the *Batik*



(*Bush on Fire*), or else the plants will become too large. But I have some rather large, full Crotons that are very happy in their containers, and look great. The only problem I've had with them to date is that they are prone to being top heavy and tend to blow over on windy days! But a brick or heavy stone placed in the pot can solve that problem too.

### The Container

Pots come in every possible size, shape and material. In addition to aesthetic appeal, you want durability. If you do plant a croton directly into a pot, keep in mind that materials such as clay (terra-cotta) and concrete are porous and you will need to water the plant more often in hot weather. (You will also have to water more often if your plants are subject to windy conditions such as on a balcony.) With other materials such as plastic, resin, and fiberglass you don't have as much of a watering issue. Make sure that the pot has a drainage hole, preferably several. If it doesn't, you will need to either make holes (risky with some materials), or else put a layer of fiberglass screening over gravel (avoid limestone) in the bottom of the pot to keep the roots away from any water that collects. You may want to place the pot on a rolling caddy, as this allows you to move the pot easily without having to lift it.

If you plan to put plants on a balcony, you may need to mitigate weight issues by avoiding the heavier materials (especially concrete) and limiting the number of plants in that location. If you want to save money by making your own containers and like the natural stone/concrete look, consider making *hypertufa* containers. Making them requires only a little more skill than it does to make mud pies, and materials can be found at any home building supply. Recipes can be found on the internet; look for ones that make the pots lighter by substituting perlite or beaded Styrofoam for sand. Even so, hypertufa are among the heaviest of containers.



This *Gold Dust* sport has thrived in a hypertufa pot for many years.

### Croton Care and Reprieve

Your next decision is whether to transfer (repot) the plant from its nursery container into the ornamental pot, or simply slip the plant, still in its plastic nursery container, inside the pot. I prefer the latter. It gives you much greater flexibility, as you can switch pots instantly, with no trauma to the plant. Otherwise, if you do re-pot, and later on want to change pots, keep in mind that some pots are very difficult to extract a plant from, depending upon its shape. Choosing a pot with a wide mouth helps to avoid this problem.

If you are planting a Croton directly into a pot, use a good potting soil. I recommend a premium potting soil which has fertilizer already in the mix, so you won't have to fertilize the plant for the next few months. Water with care; it is easy to over-water a plant in a container. However, the need for fertilizer and water increases as the plant gradually becomes root-bound. Eventually, the soil is depleted and the roots become a thick web. If you don't re-pot, the plant needs something else to sustain it. Simply applying fertilizer on a regular basis and making sure that the roots don't dry out can extend the life of the plant indefinitely.

But another technique you can try is soil replacement. This can be accomplished in two ways. One is to remove the plant from the container and cut away several inches of the roots from the bottom of the root ball, and replace with good potting soil. The other is to take a *dibble* or similar tool and insert it between the root ball and the wall of the container. Rotate the tool outward and in a circle so that a cone-shaped cavity is created, then fill it with a good potting soil. (You may cringe as you hear roots snapping during this procedure, but in the long run, it gives the plant new life). I like to make 3-4 cavities per plant. (Note: this is recommended only for 3 gallon + size containers. If you have a root-bound Croton in a one gallon pot, the best thing to do is bump it up to a 3 gallon size container).

Dibble







### **Fertilizer**

As for fertilizer, you will need to use an acid-releasing formula with Crotons. Look for fertilizer that is especially made for acid-loving plants such as azaleas, camellias and gardenias. These come in two forms, liquid and solid (granular). The liquid type may be easier to find, but, if you can locate it, a granular, slow release solid fertilizer may be most the economical. With any solid fertilizer, use it sparingly as too much can “burn” the plant. If you have a Starbucks store near you, you can forgo having to pay for fertilizer at all; just ask for their used coffee grounds. I use this all the time on my plants and it is dynamite for Crotons. I prefer to make “cold coffee” for watering the plants, rather than sprinkling the coffee grounds around the plant, but either method works. For “cold coffee,” I put a spadeful or two of grounds in a 2 gallon watering can, fill with water and apply.

Another fertilizing technique is to spray a liquid fertilizer directly on the leaves of the plant. Or, save money and spray a solution of one effervescent cold tablet per gallon of water on the leaves (You can also use this to water your plants). If you really want to kick your plants into overdrive, give them the coffee grounds and use the cold tablet spray on the leaves. It’s like Croton steroids! In the winter, I forgo the use of fertilizer and just make sure that the plants don’t dry out.

### **Light Requirements**

The best light for growing most Crotons is said to be a mix of sun and shade, but many of my plants in containers are doing fine in mostly full sun. Filtered, or shifting light as found under a tree canopy is considered the ideal, as is full sun for part of the day with shade during the rest. Avoid 100% deep shade; there needs to be some sun hitting the plant or else good color won’t develop. This is also true of a Croton used as a houseplant; it should be near a window where some sunlight is received during the day. Since crotons like high humidity, for houseplants, you may wish to set the pot in a saucer filled with gravel (not limestone) and water; just make sure the container does not come into direct contact with the water. Or, you can simply mist the leaves from time to time.



## Pruning

Ultimately, all Crotons will need pruning to address a “leggy” appearance, which occurs as old leaves die off, leaving bare stems. This problem can be avoided for some time by judicious pinching of new growth, which enhances a bushy look. When it is time to prune, choose spring or early summer if possible, so that the plant has plenty of warm weather ahead to produce new growth. Be sure to fertilize after pruning and don’t let the soil get too dry. Pruning should follow an arc across the branches so that a balanced framework is created and the center of the plant is opened up to light.

## Pests

Crotons in containers are just as susceptible to pests as those in the ground. Thrips and spider mites lead the list of common Croton pests. Spraying the undersides of leaves with a hose helps blast the critters away, but if they persist, use a pesticide recommended for these types of insects, or look for home-made recipes on the Web. I have also found fungus gnats to be a problem in containers if the potting soil is kept too wet and especially if it contains a high peat content. The larvae can chew up the plant’s roots; they can be spotted underneath the pot or on the bottom of the root ball when it is removed from the container, and they look like tiny, white worms. They can be killed using a suitable pesticide as a soil drench.

Well, you have now completed Container Gardening with Crotons 101. Don’t be afraid to try this very flexible and rewarding method of growing and displaying your favorite Crotons. And don’t forget to loan your best specimens to the Society for the annual State Fair exhibit, or, enter them for judging against other plants. Either way, thousands of people will admire your handiwork. Who could ask for more? 🌿🌿

## **Bob and Mary Halgrim surrounded by their beloved Crotons in Ft. Myers, FL**





## GRAND THEFT CASE # 0705721

This is a true story; only the names have been deleted to protect the innocent and for the fact that I don't care to discuss it any further. Except for law enforcement and my gardener, all the people mentioned are members of The Croton Society.

It was a warm and beautiful afternoon in South Florida; my handyman/gardener and I were working in my front yard. We see a stranger walking up the driveway; his truck parked on the road. The man wearing a pleasant smile introduced himself and told me he was very interested in Crotons. He astutely pointed out; we had a mutual croton collector friend. The friend is a well respected plant collector/dealer that I have known for many years. Thus, this put the stranger in better graces with me. I stopped my work, wiped the sweat from my brow and spent about 20 minutes talking with him, while walking around looking at some of my Crotons. The charming stranger won me over. I like him a lot. As he was leaving, I gave him a cutting of a Croton he inquired about. I envisioned, perhaps sometime in the future, we might even be able to trade plants.

Not long after that encounter, while checking around my yard, I noticed that something was terribly wrong! Many of my best Crotons, the cream of the crop, were severely butchered. A special Croton seedling that I had been watching carefully for over a year and had placed an airlayer on was gone! Not a trace of it was left. Another interesting seedling, over two years old, too big to pull up was severed at ground level and gone. It was devastating! It is really hard to believe that someone could be as dirty and rotten as to trespass on private property; steal lovingly cared for plants and deface property to such an extent. It didn't take long to solve the mystery. The police told me it was grand theft. Even more disheartening, the thief was the charismatic stranger and a member of the Croton Society.

I did not want the stolen goods back in pieces. I counted at least 34 fresh cuts on my plants, many an inch in diameter. I said that I would settle for being able to pick out a minimum of 34 rooted plants from the thief's collection. The thief lived in a different municipality than I. Thus, two police departments were involved. Since I didn't want cuttings back, there was no hurry to move in on the thief. He may have thought he got away with the crime, not knowing he was under surveillance by the police in his area. There are many unsolved plant thefts in South Florida, and plant enthusiasts pray for the crooks to be apprehended. While visiting Fairchild Gardens, I ran into a plant collector/dealer that has had a longtime working relationship with the thief. I told her what he did. Immediately, she said, "I have known him for fifteen years, he did not do it". "He most certainly did do it," I replied. She said, "He will deny it". I relayed what she said to the lead detective. I told him emphatically; if the thief doesn't immediately come clean and admit the crime, forget about my willingness to settle.

We will take this all the way. We will go to court; I will call the newspapers, etc. Several plant people had already told me and insisted his a\_\_ needed to be slapped into jail.

I received a phone call from the detective saying he had the thief at the Police Station. They were in the Interrogation Room. The thief admitted everything and said he was sorry. He just didn't understand the law. I literally screamed into the phone, "he didn't know what he did was wrong?" "Oh yes", said the detective. "He knew it was wrong, he just didn't understand the law or realize how severe the consequences could be". The detective went on to ask me if I could go with them right then to the thief's place and take whatever plants I wanted. I couldn't leave just then; I had a doctor's appointment. When I did go, I picked out mostly small plants in gallon containers. My heart wasn't in it. I wasn't feeling well, I just wanted closure. Right before I left, the thief did apologize, even said I could come back anytime and take whatever I wanted. I do believe he was remorseful at that moment, that day...but was it only because he had just returned from Interrogation at the Police Station and was aware he had narrowly escaped jail time? I sincerely hope not.

I also hope that anyone reading this will forever be dissuaded from stealing a plant or cutting. Cutting or defacing could present quite a problem too. An attorney can insist on replacement value of specimen plants, of like kind, like size etc. etc. Rather than stealing, always ask permission for what you would like. I believe most people would be glad to give or trade a cutting or cuttings.



*The above article in no way represents the behavior of the majority of Croton Society members.*





Zanzibar

