

Saw Palmetto

Serenoa repens

Plant Description:

This Florida native palm normally grows as a much branched clumping shrub with prostrate stems. Small fan shaped yellow-green leaves are clustered at the ends of the many stems. The leaf stalk (petiole) margins are lined with fine teeth giving the plant its common name. A form with bluish green leaves is an attractive alternative to the more common green form. Occasionally individuals with ascending trunks can reach 10 feet or more in height. Plants are perennial, evergreen and very long lived.

Mature Size: Shrub form clumps rarely exceed six feet tall but may spread for many feet over long periods of time.

Growth Rate: Slow to Moderate

Plant Habit: Spreading/Clumping

Plant Spacing: 3 to 5 feet for faster coverage

Ornamental Characteristics & Uses:

Foliage Color: Yellow-green or bluish green on different individuals

Flower Color: Creamy white (fragrant)

Bloom Time: Spring

Attracts Wildlife: Flowers are a source of nectar and pollen for bees in spring. Small mammals and birds are known to eat the olive sized fruit in fall and winter.

Uses: This plant is best used in natural areas or landscapes with a native plant theme. The trunked forms are excellent as specimen trees, singly or in groups. It is a very salt tolerant species so is an excellent choice for seaside plantings.

Growing Requirements:

Cold Hardiness Zone(s): 8 – 11

Hardy Temp: 10° F

Exposure: Full Sun to Partial Shade

Water Needs: Tolerant of both wet and dry conditions but very drought tolerant once established.

Soil Tolerances: Normally grows in sandy soils but tolerant of most soil types.

Soil pH: Acidic to Alkaline

Maintenance: Easy/Low

General Care & Growing Tips:

Fertilizing is not necessary but will increase rate of growth in new plantings. Pruning is needed only to remove dead leaves.

Common Pests:

No pests and diseases are of major concern.

Reference: Gilman, E. F. (1999). *Serenoa repens, Saw Palmetto*. University of Florida.
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fp547>

This fact sheet was written by Dr. Kyle Brown, Baker County Master Gardener, and edited by Alicia Lamborn, Baker County Horticulture Agent.