

Lethal Bronzing Disease of palms, formally called Texas Pheonix Palm Decline, was introduced to the state in 2006 and has since become very prevalent in Central Florida, including Marion County. The University of Florida is continuously researching this disease, and at this time there is no known cure. Lethal Bronzing affects many different species of palms but in Marion County we see it most prevalently in Sylvesters, Canary Island Date Palms and Sabals, our native state tree. Although the rate of death and the symptoms can vary depending on the type of palm, it takes between 6-8 months on average for a palm to die from date of infection. Common symptoms to look for is a rapidly browning palm crown that starts from the bottom fronds and works its way up towards the top relatively quickly. Once the spear leaf, which is the new leaf that emerges from the heart of the palm in the top center collapses the palm is dead.

As for preventing Lethal Bronzing, there are a few things that can be done, although none are 100% effective. UF/IFAS currently recommends injections of an antibiotic called oxytetracycline or OTC-HCL every 3 months. Information on the dosage and how to do the injections can be found on the askIFAS website or by contacting your UF/IFAS Marion County Extension Service. Please note, the dosage recommendations may change in the future as more research is being done, and the OTC-HCL is not effective if a palm is already infected. Palm samples can be taken and submitted for testing to the University of Florida Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center that specializes in palm diseases, or to the UF Plant Diagnostic Center in Gainesville. Visit askIFAS or contact the UF/IFAS Marion County Extension Service at 352-671-8400 for more information. A palm that tests positive or that is showing symptoms should be removed immediately to help avoid the spread of Lethal Bronzing Disease. We also know from recent research that the insect that vectors Lethal Bronzing breeds in grass, particularly in moist sites and low-lying areas so avoid overwatering and keep ditches mowed short. For questions or more information on Lethal Bronzing in Marion County, call the UF/IFAS Marion County Extension Service at 352-671-8400 or email Amanda Marek at mandab@ufl.edu. If you have a palm you are concerned about, please email photos to that address. A free online class on palms and turfgrass will be held on July 15th at 10am. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/PalmsandLawns>.

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