

# Palms for Central Florida

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Fact Sheet

Residential Horticulture - 030

UF/IFAS Extension Orange County

## Why Palms for the Central Florida landscape?

The real question here might be, “why not palms for the Central Florida landscape?” Palms provide a geographic aesthetic that separates Floridan gardening and landscaping from much of the rest of the country. These emblematic and evergreen cousins of grass are what people up north dream about while shoveling snow from their frozen driveways. Embracing palms in the landscape is largely an aesthetic decision that flavors the landscape in a tropical veneer. Although Central Florida is technically in the subtropics and subject to freezes, palms play an important role in landscape design and management. Palms grow more vertically relative to many trees and therefore can be used along tighter areas throughout the landscape and property borders. Due to favorable biomechanics, most palms are also fairly to highly resistant to hurricane force winds.

## Mind the Cold

There are certain limitations to consider. The pallet of available palms is wider in Central Florida relative to most of the Southeastern United States that is largely limited to the most cold hardy of palms. However, the palm diversity of mid-Florida is still limited relative to the diversity available in the tropical stronghold of Southern Florida. Of course, there is a biological explanation. Most of the palms that are suited to Central Florida do not have exposed, green crownshafts – this feature is quite noticeable on certain palms that are regularly used in South Florida like royal palms (*Roystonea regia*) and foxtail palms (*Wodyetia bifurcata*). Instead, the buds of the cold-hardy palms are usually enclosed other parts of the crown and supported foliage that consequently lead to protection from direct cold air exposure.

## Mind the Pests




Like most plants, palms are not without their biological vulnerabilities. Important diseases to consider in Central Florida are Lethal Bronzing Disease (LBD), butt rot (*Ganoderma*), fusarium wilt, bud rot (*Phytophthora palmivora*) and trunk rot (*Thielaviopsis*). Additionally, various insects like the palm weevil (*Rhynchophorus cruentatus*) can impact palm tree health, but overall, insect threats in Central Florida tend to be more aesthetic and a concern for palms already in decline. By and large, the greatest biological threat to palms in Central Florida is from LBD. However, severity of the disease often depends on species and condition of the palm prior to infection. There has been documentation of over 16 species of palms being infected by LBD – however, date palms (i.e., palms within the genus of *Phoenix*) tend to be particularly susceptible.

## What Palms Crave



Soils in Florida, with particular regard to North and Central Florida, tend to be sandy and relatively low in nutrients. Palms are some of the most sensitive plants to nutrient deficiencies in the Florida landscape. Potassium (K) and magnesium (Mg) deficiencies are the most commonly encountered nutrient issues, however, boron (B) and manganese (Mn) can also occur. The impacts of nutrient deficiencies tend to be more aesthetic (e.g., causing yellowing or browning of leaves) than a serious cause for concern; however, palms in areas with poor nutrient availability can benefit from an integrated nutrient management approach to improve overall plant health.

## Varying Supplies



Unique to this factsheet is the inclusion of information is the availability of outlined palms as plant material. Different species of plants fall in and out of favor for landscaping purposes, but this sheet covers some of the more common palm species that are both suited to Central Florida's USDA Hardiness Zone of 9B and some context of availability from local nurseries.



Species	Common Name(s)	Image(s)	Height x Width (ft)	Growth Habit	Salt Tolerance	Trade Availability	Native Range	Notes
<i>Acoelorrhaphe wrightii</i>	Paurotis palms, Everglades palm	 <p>Credit: UF/IFAS, G. Hasing</p>	20 x 20	Clumping	Moderate	Low-Moderate	Central America, Caribbean Basin, Colombia, and S Florida	Native
<i>Allagoptera arenaria</i>	Seashore palm		5 x 8	Clumping	High	Low-Moderate	Eastern Brazil	Widely cultivated in South America; has edible fruit
<i>Beccariophoenix alfredii</i>	High plateau coconut palm; hardy coconut palm	 <p>Credit: KATHERINE WAGNER-REISS, CC-BY-SA-4.0</p>	50 x 25	Single stem	Moderate-High	Low (but increasing in popularity)	Madagascar	Relatively new to cultivation in Florida; appearance is close to coconut palm but is more cold tolerant and suitable for Central Florida




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<i>Bismarckia nobilis</i>	Bismarck palm	 <p>Credit: Alejandro Bayer, CC-BY-SA-2.0</p>	30 x 20	Single stem	Moderate	High	Madagascar	Blue leave variety is more common; less wind-tolerant than most palms
<i>Butia capitata</i>	Pindo palm, jelly palm	 <p>Credit: Kenraiz, CC-BY-SA-3.0</p>	15 x 12	Single stem	Low	High	Brazil	Slow growing; has edible fruit; same species as " <i>Butia odorata</i> "
× <i>Butiagrus naboronnandii</i>	Mule palm		25 x 20	Single stem	Low	Moderate	NA	Hybrid between <i>Syagrus romanzoffiana</i> and <i>Butia capitata</i>

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<i>Copernicia alba</i>	Caranday palm, wax palm	 <p>Credit: Falconaumanni, CC-BY-SA-3.0</p>	35 x 12	Single stem	Moderate	Low	South America	Spiny petioles
<i>Livistona australis</i>	Australian cabbage palm	 <p>Credit: J. E. Davis, UF/IFAS</p>	40 x 12	Single stem	Low	Low	Eastern Australia	Spiny petioles





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<i>Livistona chinensis</i>	Chinese fan palm	 <p>Credit: UF/IFAS, G. Hasing</p>	30 x 12	Single stem	Low	High	SE Asia	Has drooping leaflet tips
<i>Livistona decipiens</i>	Ribbon palm, ribbon fan palm	 <p>Credit: T.K. Broschat, UF/IFAS</p>	30 x 12	Single stem	Low	Moderate	Eastern Australia	Same species as " <i>Livistona decora</i> "



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<i>Livistona saribus</i>	Taraw palm	 <p>Credit: Kenraiz, CC-BY-SA-4.0</p>	35 x 15	Single stem	Moderate	Low	SE Asia	Two varieties - green petiole variety is more cold tolerant than the red petiole variety
<i>Phoenix canariensis</i>	Canary Island date palm, pineapple palm	 <p>Credit: UF/IFAS; G. Hasing</p>	40 x 25	Single stem	Low	High	Canary Islands	Susceptible to lethal bronzing



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<i>Phoenix dactylifera</i>	Date palm	 <p>Credit: Emőke Dénes, CC-BY-SA-4.0</p>	50 x 25	Single stem	High	Moderate	The Middle East	Susceptible to lethal bronzing
<i>Phoenix reclinata</i>	Senegal date palm, wild date palm	 <p>Credit: Georges Jansoone, CC-BY-SA-3.0</p>	45 x 40	Clumping	Moderate	Moderate	Tropical Africa, Arabain Peninsula, Madagascar, Comoro Islands	Susceptible to lethal bronzing
<i>Phoenix roebelenii</i>	Dwarf date palm, pygmy date palm, miniature date palm	 <p>Credit: Forest &amp; Kim Starr, CC-BY-SA-3.0</p>	12 x 7	Single stem, but often planted with other stems	Moderate	High	SE Asia	Susceptible to lethal bronzing; may have problems with cold hardiness in Northern Central Florida



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<i>Phoenix sylvestris</i>	Silver date palm, Indian date, wild date palm	 Credit: UF/IFAS	40 x 25	Single stem	Moderate	High	Most of India and adjacent countries	Susceptible to lethal bronzing
<i>Rhapidophyllum hystrix</i>	Needle palm	 Credit: Homer Price, CC-BY-2.0	6 x 6	Clumping	Moderate	Moderate	Coastal Plain of SE United States	Spines on trunk; does best under shade; extremely cold hardy
<i>Rhapis excelsa</i>	Lady palm	 Credit: Forest & Kim Starr, CC-BY-SA-3.0	8 x 8	Clumping	Low	Moderate	SE China and Vietnam	Prefers shade




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<i>Sabal causiarum</i>	Puerto Rico palm, Puerto Rican hat palm	 <p>Credit: Guettarda, CC-BY-SA-3.0</p>	50 x 16	Single stem	Moderate	Low	Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, and the British Virgin Islands	Very large trunk; very cold hardy
<i>Sabal minor</i>	Dwarf palmetto	 <p>Credit: Kenraiz, CC-BY-SA-4.0</p>	8 x 8	Single stem	Moderate	Low (specialty, can be found at some native nurseries)	SE United States into Northern Mexico	Rarely grows a trunk - looks for the cultivar 'Louisiana' if trunk is desired

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<i>Sabal palmetto</i>	Sabal palm, cabbage palm	 <p>Credit: UF/IFAS, Hasing et al.</p>	50 x 10	Single stem	High	High	SE United States	Native; very cold hardy; susceptible to lethal bronzing
<i>Serenoa repens</i>	saw palmetto	 <p>Credit: UF/IFAS, J. Roberts</p>	6 x 12	Clumping	High	High	Coastal SE of the United States from LA to SC	Native; blue cultivars also available

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<i>Syagrus romanzoffiana</i>	queen palm	 <p>Credit: UF/IFAS, G. Hasing</p>	50 x 18	Single stem	Moderate	High	Paraguay, N Argentina, SE Brazil, and N Uruguay	Susceptible to fusarium wilt; less wind resistant than most species
<i>Trachycarpus fortunei</i>	windmill palm	 <p>Credit: Citron, CC BY-SA 3.0</p>	25 x 7	Single stem	Low	Low	SE Asia	Very cold tolerant

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<i>Trachycarpus martianus</i>	Khasla Hills palm		25 x 7	Single stem	Low	Low	NE India and Central Nepal	Similar to windmill palm
<i>Washingtonia filifera</i>	California fan palm	 Credit: Forest & Kim Starr, CC-BY-SA-3.0	50 x 12	Single stem	Low	Low	S California and adjacent areas of AZ and NE Mexico	Poorly adapted to humid environments; susceptible to Fusarium wilt



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<i>Washingtonia robusta</i>	Mexican fan palm		80 x 10	Single stem	Moderate	High	W Mexico	Susceptible to fusarium wilt

Additional Resources:

- [10 Common Palms of the Tampa Bay Area](#)
- [IFAS Publications on Palm Diseases](#)
- [IFAS Publications on Pest Insects and Mites](#)
- [IFAS Publications on Palm Nutrition and Fertilization](#)
- [IFAS Publications on Various Palm Species](#)
- [Ornamental Palms for Central Florida](#)
- [Ornamental Palms for South Florida](#)
- [Planting Palms – UF/IFAS Gardening Solutions](#)
- [Palms and Cycads – UF/IFAS Gardening Solutions](#)

**Learn More:** Check out horticulture classes offered by UF/IFAS Extension Orange County at [www.ocextension.eventbrite.com](http://www.ocextension.eventbrite.com) and read about Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ at <https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/>.