

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Division of Plant Industry

Native Palms of Florida: Identification and Regulation

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INTRODUCTION

Palms are among the most iconic plants in Florida landscapes. They are essential components of native habitats in Florida as well as being common ornamentals. In addition to environmental and landscape values, many palms are economically important as crops or for other uses. Unfortunately, the popularity of palms native to Florida has led to over exploitation of some species, while loss of habitat has reduced the natural populations of others. This circular is intended to help readers appreciate the variety of our native palms, identify these species and understand the protections the state provides for them.

The state of Florida has 12 native palm species (Table 1). These species and regulatory requirements for any having special status are described below. Where applicable, information about the uses of these palms is included.

Table 1. Species of palms native to Florida with regulatory and identification information.

Palm species	Special status	Harvest permit required	Habitat (Wunderlin and Hansen 2011)	Leaf type
<i>Acoelorrhaphe wrightii</i>	Threatened	No	Swamps; marshes; everglades	Palmate/costapalmate *
<i>Coccothrinax argentata</i>	Threatened	No	Pine rocklands; coastal rockland hammocks	Palmate
<i>Leucothrinax morrisii</i>	Threatened	No	Hammocks	Palmate
<i>Pseudophoenix sargentii</i>	Endangered	Yes	Coastal thickets on limestone	Pinnate
<i>Rhapidophyllum hystrix</i>	Commercially exploited	Yes	Wet to mesic hammocks	Palmate/costapalmate *
<i>Roystonea regia</i>	Endangered	Yes	Swamps and cypress sloughs	Pinnate
<i>Sabal etonia</i>	None	No	Scrub	Costapalmate
<i>Sabal miamiensis</i>	Likely extinct in the wild; sold in the nursery trade	No	Calcareous soil of pinelands; habitat lost to development	Costapalmate
<i>Sabal minor</i>	None	No	Moist to wet hammocks	Costapalmate
<i>Sabal palmetto</i>	Florida state tree	No	Savannas; hammocks; swamps	Costapalmate
<i>Serenoa repens</i>	Commercially exploited	Yes	Wet to dry flatwoods; hammocks	Palmate
<i>Thrinax radiata</i>	Endangered	Yes	Coastal thickets on limestone	Palmate

*The difference might not be readily apparent

Special status. Several native palm species are regulated by the state of Florida and are included in lists of endangered, threatened and commercially exploited plant species. Plants are listed as endangered if the native species is in imminent danger of extinction within the state and its survival is unlikely if the causes of a decline in the number of plants continue. In addition, all Florida plant species listed as endangered or threatened by the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, are defined as endangered in Florida. Threatened plants are species native to the state that are in rapid decline in Florida, but have not decreased so much as to be considered endangered. Commercially exploited plants are native species, harvested in significant numbers from native habitats and sold or transported for sale.



Regulatory requirements. If a person who is not the owner of a property wishes to collect one or more plants or plant parts of endangered plants from public or private land, or three or more plants or plant parts of commercially exploited plants from public or private land, a permit from FDACS-DPI (FDACS 08025) and landowner permission are required. If the owner of a property wishes to harvest protected species for sale, then a state permit is also required. Harvesting plants listed as threatened, including several palm species, requires only landowner permission.

SPECIES INFORMATION

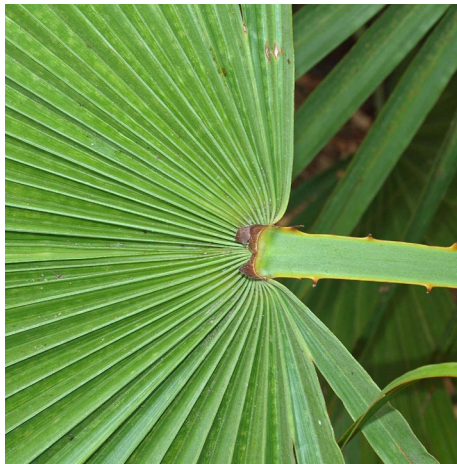
Descriptions of the palms are based on Anderson 2011, Riffle et al. 2012, Stevenson 1996, Wunderlin and Hansen 2011 and information from the Flora of North America website on the palm family by Zona. Ethnobotanical information about names and uses of these species comes from Austin 2004 and Mabberley 2017. The number of species in each genus is provided by Mabberley 2017 and other sources listed above. Regulatory information is based on Chapter 5B-40, Florida Administrative Code, Preservation of Native Flora of Florida. Distribution maps and several photographs are from the Atlas of Florida Plants, maintained by the Institute for Systematic Botany at the University of South Florida.

Acoelorrhaphe wrightii - Everglades palm, paurotis palm

Acoelorrhaphe wrightii is listed as **threatened** by the state; **no state permit** is required to harvest this palm.



Acoelorrhaphe wrightii. Leaf lower surface with minor costapalmate attachment
Photo by Patti Anderson, DPI



Acoelorrhaphe wrightii. Leaf upper surface with lobed hastula
Photo by Patti Anderson, DPI

Description

This palm grows in large clumps of upright stems to 6 m (about 20 ft) tall and 10 cm (4 in) in diameter, covered with old leaf bases and fibers that gradually fall with age. The palmately divided leaves are almost 1 meter (about 3 feet) across, induplicate, with the blade divided more than half its length by numerous, stiff, narrow segments. The upper leaf surface is bright green, while the undersurface can be pale green or silvery. The leaf segment tips are bifid (divided by a deep cleft into two parts). The petiole has a lobed hastula (a flap covering the point of attachment to the leaf blade) and is armed with robust teeth (2-5 mm or near .25 in long) that curve upward or downward along both margins. Inflorescences (ca. 1 m or 3 ft long) are branched to four orders and extend beyond the leaves. Flowers are small, creamy white and bisexual. Fruits are small (1-1.5 cm or about .5 in), spherical, orange when immature, then black when ripe. The palm is native to southern Florida and the Caribbean in low-elevation and easily inundated areas.

Identifying characters

Everglades palms can be recognized by their erect, clustering habit and are found in or near brackish swamps or regularly flooded areas. These fan palms have robust teeth that may curve both upward and downward along petiole margins. The underside of the leaf blade is clothed in silvery scales, and transverse veinlets are visible with magnification.

Similar species

This genus contains only a single species, and there are no closely related similar species. *Serenoa repens* could be confused with *Acoelorrhaphe wrightii*, but the Everglades palm is erect with a much taller and slenderer stem than the occasionally upright *Serenoa repens*. The marginal teeth of the *Serenoa*'s petiole are smaller (0.5-2 mm or no more than .125 inch long). In addition, inflorescences of *Acoelorrhaphe* are longer than its leaves. *Washingtonia robusta* also has petioles armed with teeth, but those of the washingtonia palm are dark brown, rather than orange, and are much larger than the teeth of the Everglades palm.



Acoelorrhaphe wrightii. Everglades palm, orange-colored teeth along petiole.

Photo by Joel Timyan, [Atlas of Florida Plants](#)

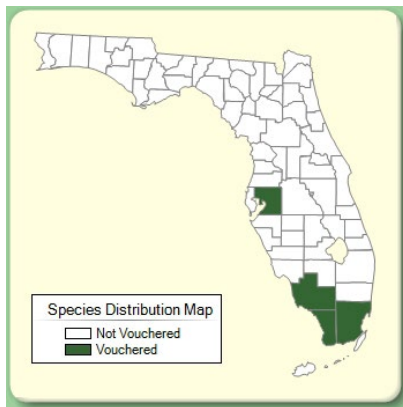


Washingtonia robusta, Washingtonia palm, very robust brown teeth along petiole.

Photo by Patti Anderson, DPI

Comments

Acoelorrhaphe wrightii is native to south Florida, southeast Mexico, the West Indies, Central America and Colombia. In Florida, this palm has been documented in Collier, Monroe and Miami-Dade counties and at least once in Hillsborough County. The leaf shape has been described as both "palmate" and "minorly costapalmate." The photograph of the intersection of the petiole with the leaf blade shows the very small costa. The leaves of this palm have been used for thatch and rope and the fruit is said to be edible.



Complete species name with author or authors

Acoelorrhaphe wrightii (Grisebach & H. Wendland) H. Wendland ex Beccari

Synonyms (names by which the species has been known in the past)

Acanthosabal caespitosa Proschowsky
Acoelorrhaphe arborescens (Sargent) Beccari
Acoelorrhaphe pinetorum Bartlett
Brahea psilocalyx Burret
Copernicia wrightii Grisebach & H. Wendland
Paurotis androsana O. F. Cook
Paurotis arborescens (Sargent) O. F. Cook
Paurotis psilocalyx (Burret) Lundell

All species distribution maps within this circular indicate the counties in which each palm species has been documented with a specimen deposited in a public herbarium.

***Coccothrinax argentata* - Florida silver palm**

Coccothrinax argentata is listed as **threatened** by the state; **no state permit** is required to harvest this palm.



Coccothrinax argentata
Photo by Patti Anderson, DPI



Coccothrinax argentata with dark fruit
Photo by T. Ann Williams, [Atlas of Florida Plants](#)



Thrinax radiata with white fruit
Photo by T. Ann Williams, [Atlas of Florida Plants](#)

Description

This palm has a single, erect stem, to 6 m tall (20 ft), up to 13 cm (5 in) in diameter, with faint rings from leaf scars encircling the stem. Stems of younger palms are covered with matted fibers from old leaf bases. Its leaves are palmate (fan shaped) with the blade about 1 m (3 ft) across and divided more than three-fourths its length by numerous, narrow segments that droop at the tips. The upper leaf surface is bright green, but the underside is silvery. Leaf tips are divided in two by a deep cleft (bifid). Its fibrous leaf sheaths have two layers, and the unarmed petiole is not split at the base. Flowers are held on an inflorescence usually shorter than the leaves, to about 60 cm (2 ft) long, and branched to two orders with up to nine primary branches. The white flowers have both male and female parts. The spherical, ripe fruits are purplish-black and 5-13 mm (up to .5 in) in diameter.

Identifying characters

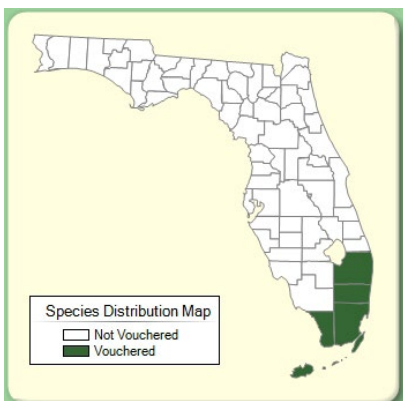
Florida silver palm can be recognized as erect fan palms found on limestone soils, including pine rocklands and sandy dunes. Their leaf sheaths have finely woven fibers, and the smooth petioles do not split at the base. With a hand lens, silvery scales on the underside of the leaf blade and a lack of visible transverse veinlets can help confirm the palm's identity.

Similar species

The genus *Coccothrinax* has 49 species, found throughout the West Indies, but only one of these species is native to Florida. Several Caribbean species are planted as ornamentals in South Florida. These may be distinguished by the combination of leaf sheath fibers and color of the leaf undersides. *Thrinax* species are similar, but the petioles of *Thrinax* split at the base while those of *Coccothrinax* do not. The fruits of *Coccothrinax* are dark purplish-black, but ripe fruits of *Thrinax* species are white.

Comments

Coccothrinax argentata is found growing in Broward, Monroe, Miami-Dade and Palm Beach counties in Florida, as well as in the Bahamas, Cuba, Jamaica and Honduras. The palm heart is reportedly edible, but not used much for that purpose. The leaves have been used for thatch roofs and for making brooms, baskets and hats. The stems are sometimes used for pilings and fence posts.



Complete species name with author or authors

Coccothrinax argentata (Jacquin) L.H.Bailey

Synonyms (names by which the species has been known in the past)

Coccothrinax argentata (Jacq.) L.H. Bailey subsp. *garberi* (Chapm.) Zona, Franc.-Ort. & Jestrow

Coccothrinax garberi (Chapman) Sargent

Coccothrinax jucunda Sargent

Coccothrinax jucunda Sargent var. *marquesensis* Beccari

Palma argentata Jacquin

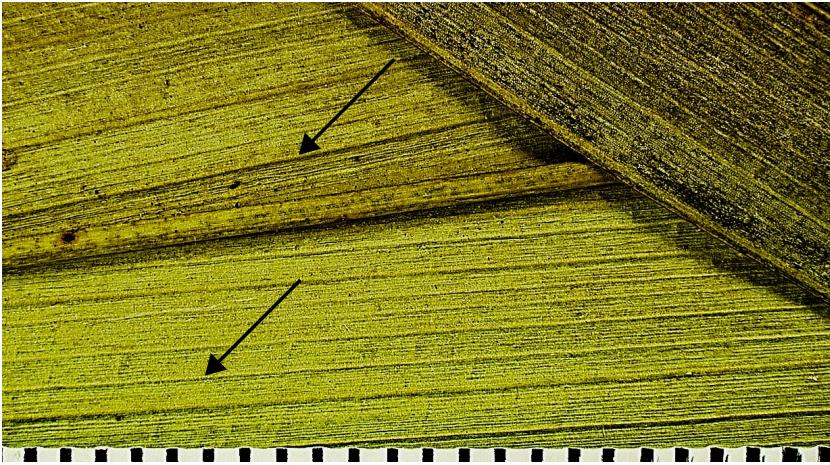
Thrinax argentea Loddiges ex Schultes & Schultes f. var. *garberi* (Chapman) Chapman

Thrinax garberi Chapman

Coccothrinax jucunda Sargent var. *macroserma* Beccari

***Leucothrinax morrisii* - brittle thatch palm; Keys thatch palm; white thatch palm**

Leucothrinax morrisii is listed as **threatened** by the state; **no state permit** is required to harvest this palm.



Leucothrinax morrisii with transverse veinlets indicated (scale in mm)

Photo by Patti Anderson, DPI

Description

This species grows to 9 m (30 ft) tall and 20 cm (8 in) in diameter with an erect, gray stem marked by obscure, incomplete leaf scars. There are no spines or vicious teeth on this palm. The upper part of the stem is covered with matted fibers and split leaf bases, while fibrous roots form a bulging mat (called a “boss”) at the base. The leaves are palmate, with a circular blade 60 cm (2 ft) across, divided at least half its length by numerous, lanceolate segments with stiff, bifid tips. The petiole (leaf stalk) is usually longer than the blade. The upper leaf surface is glossy green or glaucous (waxy blue-green); the undersurface, silvery, covered with white wax and tiny, dark dot-like scales. The leaflet midribs and marginal ribs are prominent and transverse veinlets are visible with a hand lens. Inflorescences are 1-1.2 m, emerging through split leaf bases, arching and branched to two orders, and usually equal or exceed the leaves in length. The white flowers have both male and female parts. Fruits are small, 6-8 mm in diameter (.33 in), spherical and white when ripe, and the pedicel (stalk holding each fruit) is less than 1 mm (.0313 in).

Identifying characters

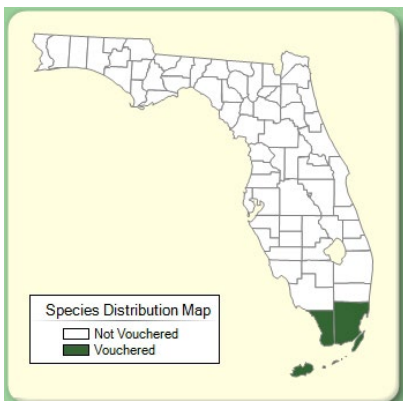
The Keys thatch palm is a solitary, upright palm with palmate leaves. Leaf blade undersides are silvery, leaf sheaths split at the base and the small, white fruit have a very short stalk (less than 1 mm or .0313 in). Transverse veinlets on the underside of leaves are visible with a hand lens.

Similar species

Coccothrinax species are similar, but have chocolate brown to purple-black fruit and the leaf bases do not split.

Comments

Leucothrinax contains only a single species, described in 2008. The name of this palm was changed from *Thrinax morrisii*, but the order name still appears in many sources and in the nursery trade. This species is native to Florida, Anguilla, Antigua, Barbuda, Bahamas, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Turks and Caicos Islands and has been cultivated widely in the West Indies. The fibers of this palm were made into cords and ropes as well as used for thatch roofs and stuffing for bedding. The fruits are reported to be sweet.



Complete species name with author or authors

Leucothrinax morrisii (H. Wendland) C. Lewis & Zona

Synonyms (names by which the species has been known in the past)

Simpsonia microcarpa (Sargent) O. F. Cook

Thrinax keyensis Sargent

Thrinax microcarpa Sargent

Thrinax morrisii H. Wendland

Thrinax bahamensis O. F. Cook

Thrinax drudei Beccari

Thrinax ekmanii Burret

Thrinax ponceana O. F. Cook

Thrinax praeceps O. F. Cook

Thrinax punctulata Beccari

***Pseudophoenix sargentii* - Sargent's cherry palm, buccaneer palm**

Pseudophoenix sargentii is listed as **endangered** by the state; a **state permit** is required to harvest this palm.



***Pseudophoenix sargentii* habit**
Photos by Patti Anderson, DPI



***Pseudophoenix sargentii* stem with leaf scars**
Photos by Patti Anderson, DPI



***Pseudophoenix sargentii* leaflets with ramenta**
Photos by Patti Anderson, DPI

Description

Pseudophoenix sargentii is a solitary (non-clumping), erect palm to 8 m (25 ft) tall and 30 cm (10 in) in diameter. The stem has slight bulges at variable points. Young stems are gray-green, but turn gray with age, and are marked with prominent, raised, brown ring scars. The leaves are pinnate, with a twisting rachis, over 2 m (7 ft) long, with linear, blue-green, leaflets arranged in groups of three to five, at divergent angles, held in a more or less plumose, V-shape. The somewhat open, short, stout crown shaft is formed from waxy, gray-green or blue-green leaf sheaths. The leaflets have clumps of matted brown hairs (ramenta) near the point of attachment on the underside of the midrib, acute tips and obvious secondary veins. There are no spines. The inflorescences may be erect or arching, about 1 m (3-4 ft) long and branched to five orders with yellow or greenish-yellow flowers. Bisexual flowers are produced at the base of the inflorescence, with male (staminate only) flowers toward the tips. Fruits are 1-2 cm (about .5 in) long, spherical to ovoid or three-lobed, and scarlet red when ripe, with remnant sepals at the base.

Identifying characters

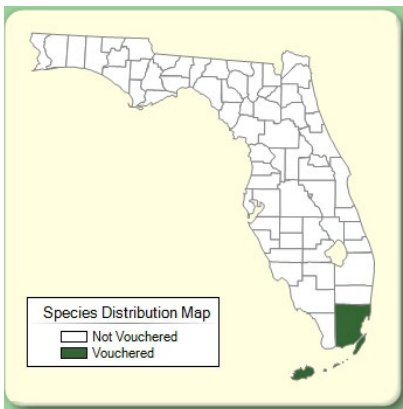
These palms have solitary, erect stems bulging slightly at variable points. The pinnate leaves to 2 m (7 ft) long have a twisting rachis. The linear, blue-green, plumose leaflets are arranged in groups of three to five, inserted at divergent angles. The short, stout crown shaft is a waxy, gray-green color.

Similar species

Roystonea regia shares many similar characters, but *Pseudophoenix* has a smaller overall stature, a more open, gray-green crown shaft, and fruit with remnant sepals at the base. Although the name *Pseudophoenix* means "false *Phoenix*" (as in the *Phoenix* date palm), the two genera differ in many ways, including the leaflet folding (reduplicate in *Pseudophoenix* with the midrib higher than the leaflet margins and induplicate in *Phoenix* species with the midrib lower than the leaflet margins), the absence of sharp spines on the leaves of *Pseudophoenix* and the absence of a crown shaft in *Phoenix* species.

Comments

The genus *Pseudophoenix* has four species and all are similar in distribution. Our native species of this strikingly beautiful palm is also native to sandy, limestone soils near the coasts of Mexico, Central America and several Caribbean islands. It is also sometimes cultivated in seaside landscapes, but is very slow-growing. The stem was sometimes tapped for wine-making, and the leaves have been used for weaving hats.



Complete species name with author or authors

Pseudophoenix sargentii H. Wendland ex Sargent

Synonyms (names by which the species has been known in the past)

Chamaephoenix sargentii (H. Wendland ex Sargent) Curtiss

Sargentia aricocca H. Wendland & Drude ex Salomon

Cyclospathe northropii O. F. Cook

***Rhapidophyllum hystrix* - needle palm, hedgehog palm, vegetable porcupine**

Rhapidophyllum hystrix is listed as commercially **exploited**; a state **permit is required** to harvest this palm.



***Rhapidophyllum hystrix*.** Growing in landscape
Photo by Patti Anderson, DPI



***Rhapidophyllum hystrix*.** Spines
Photo by Patti Anderson, DPI



***Rhaps excelsa*.** No spines
Photo by Patti Anderson, DPI

Description

This species is a clustering, more or less trunkless palm, but sometimes has a short stem hidden by a crown of matted fibers that can elongate to about 1 m (3 ft) in height. Sharp, stiff, needle-like fibers, 15-20 cm (6-8 in) long, cover the stem and protect the inflorescence. Leaves are palmate, or very slightly costapalmate, with blades over 1 m (3-4 ft) wide divided very deeply by numerous, stiff segments splitting between the folds, with 2 to 4 obvious veins. The upper leaf surface is dark green, but the underside is covered by a layer of silvery, waxy scales (although the silver color can wear away as the leaf ages). The leaf tips are jagged. The hastula is very short and rounded or triangular. Separate male and female inflorescences (about 30 cm or 1ft long) are usually on separate palms (but both can occur on one individual). They are branched once and are usually hidden within the leaves and stiff spines. Flowers may appear yellow or pale lavender in color. The spherical to oval fruits are 1.5-2.5 cm (.5-1 in) long, reddish brown to purplish brown when ripe and covered with wooly, yellow-brown hairs.

Identifying characters

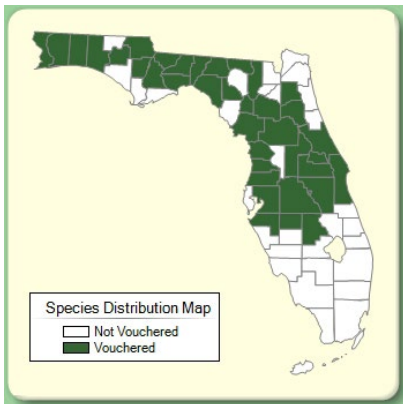
Clustering, more or less trunkless fan palms with sharp, stiff, needle-like fibers, 15-20 cm (6-8 in) long, covering the stem and with leaf segments divided between the folds with 2-4 veins.

Similar species

Serenoa repens perhaps, but the saw palmetto has armed petioles and no upward-pointing needle-like spines. *Rhaps excelsa* has multi-ribbed, jagged-tipped segments split between the folds, but no needle-like spines.

Comments

This genus has only one species, and it is native to the southeastern United States (South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama and Mississippi). The palm is cold hardy and can survive north of this range to USDA Plant Hardiness Zone 6. Black bears are reported to eat the fruits. In Florida, this palm is included on the state's list of Commercially Exploited Species, which controls harvesting of wild-collected plants. Because the palm is slow growing, and its seeds are slow to germinate, mature palms have been dug up from the coastal forest understory for landscape plantings. This practice has led to a reduction in the numbers of wild plants. The state attempts to limit over-harvesting through its permitting process.



Complete species name with author or authors

Rhapidophyllum hystrix (Pursh) H. Wendland & Drude ex Drude

Synonyms (names by which the species has been known in the past)

Chamaerops hystrix Pursh

Corypha hystrix Fraser ex Thouin

Rhaps caroliniana Kunth

Sabal hystrix (Pursh) Nuttall

***Roystonea regia* - Cuban royal palm, Florida royal palm**

Roystonea regia listed as **endangered**; a state **permit is required** to harvest this palm.



***Roystonea regia*.** Glossy green crown shaft
Photo by Patti Anderson, DPI



Wodyetia bifurcata with dark hairs
Photo by Patti Anderson, DPI

Description

Royal palms have solitary, erect, grayish white stems to 30 m (about 100 ft) tall and 40-60 cm (up to 2 ft) in diameter, but the stems can be swollen to 75 cm (30 in) at the base and toward the middle. Leaf scars form a regular pattern of closely spaced rings, but are not raised nor prominent from a distance. The crown shaft (formed by leaf bases wrapped tightly around the palm stem) of up to 2 m (over 6 ft) in length is bright, glossy green and slightly swollen at the base. The leaves are pinnate, to 3 m (9-10 ft) long with leaflets having prominent secondary ribs and scale-like hairs along the undersurface of the midrib. The leaflets have acute tips and are held in several planes (plumose). Lower leaves droop downward. Inflorescences can be up to 1 m (3 ft) long and about the same width and are densely branched to three orders. The palm has separate, white, staminate (male) and pistillate (female) flowers. The oblong to ovoid, 1-1.5 cm (.5 in) long fruits are purplish black when ripe.

Identifying characters

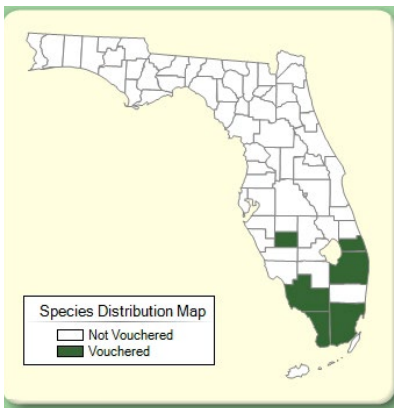
Roystonea regia is a majestic, upright, pinnate palm with a grayish white stem often swollen at the base or midpoint or both and has somewhat glossy green, plumose leaflets with prominent secondary ribs on either side of the midrib.

Similar species

There are 10 other *Roystonea* species with different stem colors, flower colors and fruit characters, but the species can be quite difficult to identify without a hand lens or microscope. *Wodyetia bifurcata*, the foxtail palm, is similar in having an upright, whitish stem, and plumose, pinnate leaves, but its leaves have dark gray to black hairs along the leaf rachis and among the plumose segments. In addition, the overall appearance of the foxtail palm is more massive than the royal palm.

Comments

Roystonea regia is native to Florida and the Caribbean region. This species is commonly planted as a street tree lining grand boulevards in South Florida cities although it is listed as endangered and a permit is required for harvesting this palm (including collecting seeds) from the wild. In the past, this palm was harvested for the edible heart of palm and its leaves were collected to use as thatch for roofing. The fruits have been used for feeding swine and perhaps other livestock. The royal palm is recognized as the national tree of Cuba.



Complete species name with author or authors

Roystonea regia (Kunth) O.F.Cook

Synonyms (names by which the species has been known in the past)

Euterpe jenmanii C.H. Wright

Euterpe ventricosa C.H. Wright

Oenocarpus regius (Kunth) Sprengel

Oreodoxa regia Kunth

Palma elata W. Bartram

Roystonea elata (W. Bartram) F. Harper

Roystonea floridana O.F. Cook

Roystonea jenmanii (C.H. Wright) Burret

Roystonea ventricosa (C.H. Wright) L.H. Bailey

***Sabal etonia* - scrub palmetto**

Sabal etonia is **not regulated** by the state; **no state permit** is required to harvest this palm.



***Sabal etonia*.** Strongly costapalmate, yellow green leaf with marginal fibers and old flower stalk
Photo by Patti Anderson, DPI



***Sabal etonia*.** Young seedling leaves, starting to curve, yellow green with marginal fibers
Photo by Patti Anderson, DPI



***Sabal etonia*.** Inflorescences shorter than the leaves.
Photo by John Hays, Atlas of Florida Plants
<http://florida.plantatlas.usf.edu/photo.aspx?ID=1815>

Description

This short palm has a mainly subterranean stem that rarely grows upright to 2 m (6 ft) tall, but is not a clumping palm. The leaf blades are strongly costapalmate, with stiff, yellow green segments split almost to the base of the blade. The leaf segments have bifid tips and long threadlike fibers along their margins. The petioles are unarmed. Inflorescences are densely branched to two orders and are shorter than or about as long as the leaves. When ripe, fruits are spherical to ovoid, brown or black drupes, 9-13 mm (.5 in) long.

Identifying characters

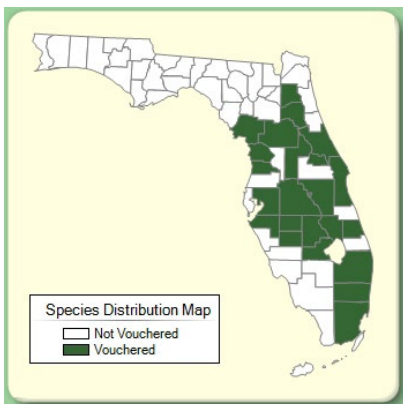
This species is a solitary, usually subterranean, palm with strongly costapalmate, yellow green leaves with marginal fibers. The inflorescence is branched to two orders and is shorter than or about as long as the leaves.

Similar species

There are 16 species in the *Sabal* genus native to the southeastern United States, northern South America and the Caribbean, and all share at least a few similar characters. The species most like the scrub palmetto is the dwarf palmetto, *Sabal minor*, another palm in this genus with an underground stem. They differ dramatically in that *S. etonia* is a palm of dry, scrubby areas, while *S. minor* is found in swamps and wet areas. In addition, *S. minor* has gray-green and slightly costapalmate leaves, with few to no marginal fibers along the leaf segments, and its inflorescences exceed the leaves in length.

Comments

This palm is native to central and southeastern Florida scrublands. The genus is among the most common in and around the Caribbean region and among the few native to the continental United States. The leaves of this palm have been used as thatch for roofs and for making small objects such as baskets and hats.



Complete species name with author or authors

Sabal etonia Swingle ex Nash

Synonyms (names by which the species has been known in the past)

Sabal adansonii Guersent var. *megacarpa* Chapman

Sabal megacarpa (Chapm.) Small

***Sabal miamiensis* – Miami palmetto**

S. miamiensis is extinct in the wild; **no harvesting permits** are granted.

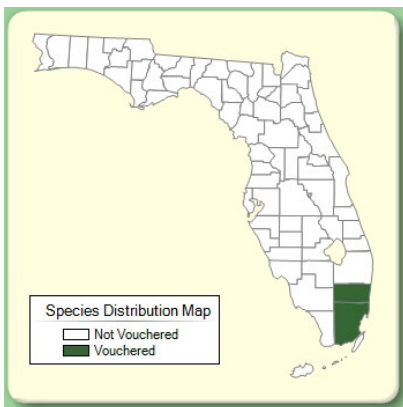


***Sabal miamiensis*.** Collected in Miami-Dade County, 16 December 1925



***Sabal miamiensis*.** Collected in Miami-Dade County, 16 December 1925

Sabal miamiensis Zona is not listed as endangered; it has been lost from the wild and can only be found in a few plant nurseries and display gardens. Some palm scholars consider this species to be a hybrid of *S. palmetto* and *S. etonia* or an ecological variation of *S. etonia*, but it was validly published with this name in 1984 and is recognized by the expert authors of the *Flora of North America*. It was characterized by subterranean stems, strongly costapalmate leaves and growth on oolitic limestone soils of South Florida.



Complete species name with author or authors

Sabal miamiensis Zona

Synonyms (names by which the species has been known in the past)

None

<http://florida.plantatlas.usf.edu/Plant.aspx?id=1119>

Rest in peace.

***Sabal minor* - blue-stem palmetto, dwarf palmetto**

Sabal minor is **not regulated** by the state; **no state permit** is required to harvest this palm.



***Sabal minor*.** Blue green leaves and small costa
Photo by Patti Anderson, DPI



***Sabal minor*.** Inflorescences longer than the leaves
Photo by Patti Anderson, DPI

Description

This species has a solitary, subterranean stem, but is rarely seen growing upright with a stem to 2 m (6 ft) tall. The leaves are minorly costapalmate (with a very small costa), grayish green in color, circular in shape, with stiff segments held almost in a single plane or slightly folded and split about half the length of the blade with few or no fibers between segments. The leaf segment tips are slightly bifid. Each leaf is split at the center of the blade almost to the costa, dividing the blade nearly in half. There are no spines on the petiole nor elsewhere on this palm. The inflorescences are branched to two orders and grow taller than the leaves. The fruits are spherical to ovoid and when ripe, brown or black and 6-10 mm (about .25 in) long.

Identifying characters

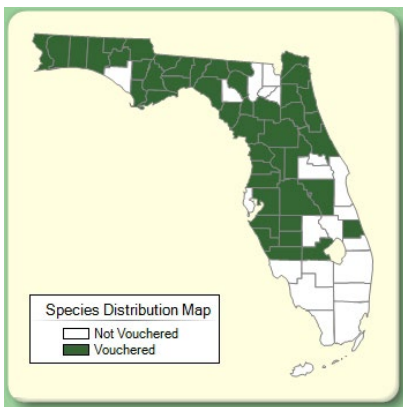
This is a solitary, unarmed, usually subterranean palm with weakly costapalmate, grayish green leaves, split almost to the costa, dividing the blade nearly in half. Inflorescences are longer than the leaves.

Similar species

Sabal etonia is another species with a subterranean stem, but the leaves are yellow-green and strongly costapalmate, with abundant marginal fibers. The two species are often confused, but *S. etonia* grows in Florida's dry, scrublands while *S. minor* is a palm of swamps and wet hammocks.

Comments

This palm is native to the southern United States from North Carolina to Texas and northeast Mexico. In Florida, it is found from the panhandle to the central peninsula. This genus is among the most common in and around the Caribbean region and among the few native to the continental United States. As with other species in the genus, the leaves of this palm were used as a source of thatch for roofing, and heart of palm was eaten as a vegetable.



Complete species name with author or authors

Sabal minor (Jacquin) Persoon

Synonyms (names by which the species has been known in the past)

Brahea minima (Nuttall) H. Wendland
Chamaerops arundinacea (Aiton) Wood
Corypha minor Jacquin
Rhapis acaulis Willdenow
Rhapis arundinacea Aiton
Sabal adansonii Guersent
Sabal minima Nuttall
Sabal serrulata (Michaux) Nuttall ex Schultes & Schultes f., var. *minima* (Nuttall) A. W. Wood
Chamaerops acaulis Michaux
Chamaerops louisiana Darby
Corypha pumila Walter
Sabal adiantina Rafinesque
Sabal deeringiana Small
Sabal louisiana (Darby) Bomhard
Sabal pumila (Walter) Elliott

***Sabal palmetto* - cabbage palm, sabal palmetto, sabal palm**

Sabal palmetto is the state tree of Florida, but it is **not regulated** by the state; **no state permit** is required to harvest this palm.



***Sabal palmetto*.** Strongly arching costapalmate leaves
Photo by Patti Anderson, DPI



***Sabal palmetto*.** Stems with and without bootjacks
Photo by Patti Anderson, DPI

Description

The cabbage palm has a solitary, upright stem to 24 m (70-80 ft) tall and to 35 cm (14-15 in) in diameter. Old leaf bases often persist and arc called "boots" or "bootjacks," but they can also fall away to leave a smooth stem. The leaves are strongly arching costapalmate, and leaf segments have numerous fibers along their margins. Inflorescences equal or exceed the length of the leaves and are branched to three orders. Individual flowers are creamy white and bisexual. The fruit is black when ripe, 8-14 mm (about .5 in) in diameter and usually about the size and shape of a medium blueberry.

Identifying characters

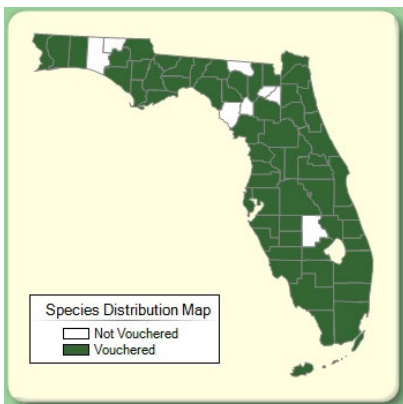
This palm has costapalmate leaves with a smooth petiole without teeth or spines. The inflorescences are arching and equaling or exceeding the leaves in length. Ripe fruits are black, about the size and shape of a medium blueberry.

Similar species

Sabal minor is similar in that a young *Sabal palmetto* can grow many years before its stem rises above the ground. A young *S. palmetto* can be distinguished from *S. minor*, which has a true underground stem, by the prominence of the curved shape of the *S. palmetto* costapalmate leaf and the abundant thread-like fibers found on the margins of the sinuses between its leaf segments.

Comments

Sabal palmetto is native to the Bahamas, Cuba, Turks and Caicos Islands and the southeastern United States from North Carolina to Florida. The genus is among the most common in and around the Caribbean region and among the few native to the continental United States. In Florida, the cabbage palm is found throughout the state in both swampy and dry habitats. This palm is designated as the state tree of both South Carolina and Florida. In the past, leaves were used as thatch for roofs, and occasionally, the heart of palm is still eaten as a vegetable commonly called swamp cabbage.



Complete species name with author or authors

Sabal palmetto (Walter) Loddiges ex Schultes & Schultes f.

Synonyms (names by which the species has been known in the past)

Chamaerops palmetto (Walter) Michaux
Corypha palmetto Walter
Inodes schwarzii O.F. Cook
Inodes palmetto (Walter) O.F. Cook
Sabal bahamensis (Beccari) L.H. Bailey
Sabal jamesiana Small
Sabal parviflora Beccari
Sabal schwarzii (O.F. Cook) Beccari
Sabal viatoris L.H. Bailey

***Serenoa repens* - saw palmetto**

Serenoa repens is listed as **commercially exploited**; a **state permit is required** to harvest this palm, including collecting seeds.



***Serenoa repens*.** Lower leaf blade hastula and short spines along petiole (leaf stalk)
Photo by Patti Anderson, DPI



***Serenoa repens*.** Upper leaf blade with arrow shaped (deltoid) form of hastula
Photo by Patti Anderson, DPI

Description

This palm species has clumping, underground or creeping stems (0.5-2 m or 6 ft tall) and rarely growing upright 6-7.5 m (20 ft) tall. The fan-shaped leaves are most notable for the sharp teeth along the petiole edges, especially toward the base. The hastula is papery with the upper hastula rounded to deltoid (arrow shaped) and the lower hastula semicircular and often split into two lobes. The palmate leaves sometimes twist with slight folds, as if the leaf blade were too large for the petiole. Leaf segments are rigid and divided into segments with split tips. Although leaves are usually yellowish green, a blue-green form is occasionally found in nature and is popular with landscapers. Inflorescences are shorter than the leaves, with fragrant, bee-attracting, perfect white to pale-yellow flowers. When ripe, the ovoid fruits are blue-black, to 2.5 cm (1/2 – 1 in) long, with a rancid odor.

Identifying characters

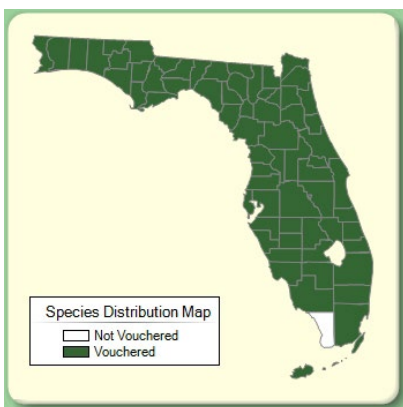
Serenoa repens has a creeping or underground stem (occasionally curving upward, above ground). The leaves are armed with saw-tooth spines along the petiole of the palmate leaf. The ripe fruit is blue-black in color and is usually about 2.5 cm (1 inch) long.

Similar species

The genus *Serenoa* has only one species, so there are no closely related palms that might be confused with saw palmetto. Although *Sabal* species have no spines, *Serenoa repens* leaves are sometimes unarmed when young and might be confused with immature *Sabal* palms. Even young individuals can be distinguished because *Sabal* palms have costapalmate leaves with an obvious "arrow" jutting well into the leaf blade while the hastula of *Serenoa* leaves is a papery covering less than 2 cm (about .75 in) long.

Comments

Serenoa repens is native to the southeastern United States from Virginia to Mississippi and in Florida, it is a common feature of wet and dry habitats throughout the state. The leaves of this palm have been used as thatch or fiber for rope, while the fruits are harvested for medicine, oils and even food. Bears and other wildlife also depend on this palm for food and cover.



Complete species name with author or authors

Serenoa repens (W. Bartram) Small

Synonyms (names by which the species has been known in the past)

Brahea serrulata (Michaux) H. Wendland

Chamaerops serrulata Michaux

Corypha repens W. Bartram

Diglossophyllum serrulatum (Michaux) H. Wendland ex Salomon

Sabal serrulata (Michaux) Nuttall ex Schultes & Schultes f.

Serenoa repens (W. Bartram) Small, forma *glauca* Moldenke

Serenoa serrulata (Michaux) G. Nicholson

Corypha obliqua W. Bartram

***Thrinax radiata* - Florida thatch palm, silk-top thatch palm**

Thrinax radiata is listed as **endangered** by the state; a **state permit is required** to harvest this palm.



***Thrinax radiata*.** Upper leaf blade with hastula
Photo by Patti Anderson, DPI



Thrinax radiata with stem and white fruit
Photo by Dennis Girard, Atlas of Florida Plants
<http://florida.plantatlas.usf.edu/photo.aspx?ID=2067>



Thrinax radiata base of stem with bulge of roots
Photo by Photo by David J. Stang, wikimedia
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Thrinax_radiata#/media/File:Thrinax_radiata_8zz.jpg

Description

Thrinax radiata has a solitary, erect, gray to brown stem to 12 m (40 ft) tall and 13 cm (5 in) in diameter, with obscure leaf scars. The upper stem near the leaf canopy is covered with split leaf bases and matted fibers. With age, the base of the stem may bulge with a mass of roots. The leaves are palmate (fan-shaped), with a circular blade 1-1.5 m (4-5 ft) across, divided at least half its length by numerous segments with drooping tips. The petiole is nearly as long as the blade, unarmed (no spines or thorns), and split at the base. The upper leaf surface is dull green, while the undersurface is a lighter, yellowish green. The inflorescence emerges through split leaf bases, arching and branched to two orders. The white flowers have both male and female parts. The small fruits are 7-8 mm (.31 in) in diameter, spherical and white when ripe. The pedicel (fruit stalk) is conspicuous, usually more than 1 mm (.03 in) long.

Identifying characters

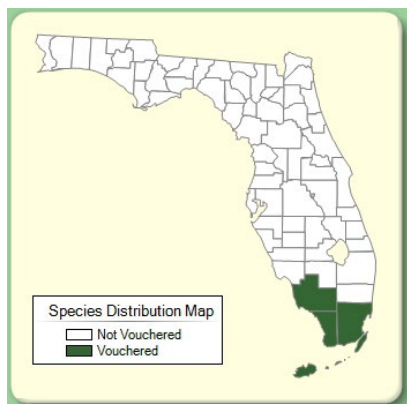
This upright palm has fan-shaped leaves colored yellow green on the underside, drooping leaf tips, leaf sheaths that split at the base and small, white, ripe fruit on stalks over 1 mm (.03 in) long.

Similar species

Coccothrinax species are similar to *Thrinax radiata*, but they have chocolate brown to purple black fruit, and their leaf bases do not split. (See *Coccothrinax*)

Comments

Thrinax radiata is native to South Florida, including the Florida Keys, the Bahamas, Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica, Belize, Honduras and the Yucatán in Mexico. In South Florida, it grows on coastal limestone soils. The fibers of this species have been used to make ropes and other cordage, while its leaves were commonly seen as thatch in the Florida Keys. Other parts of the palm have uses as food and medicine.



Complete species name with author or authors

Thrinax radiata Loddiges ex Schultes & Schultes f.

Synonyms (names by which the species has been known in the past)

Coccothrinax martii Griseb. & H. Wendl. ex Griseb.

Coccothrinax radiata (Loddiges ex Schultes & Schultes f.) Sargent ex K. Schumann

Thrinax floridana Sargent

Thrinax martii Grisebach & H. Wendl.

Thrinax wendlandiana Beccari

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