

## Underutilized Palms for Central Florida

Eric Schmidt

Harry P. Leu Gardens

Orlando,FL

407-246-3749

[eric.schmidt@cityoforlando.net](mailto:eric.schmidt@cityoforlando.net)

1. *Allagoptera arenaria*- Seashore Palm- The Seashore Palm grows in clumps and reaches 4 to 6 feet tall. It is usually trunkless but can sometimes develop a trunk several feet in height. This palm needs full sun and a well-drained soil. It is very drought and salt tolerant. The Seashore Palm is native to coastal regions of southeastern Brazil.
2. *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*- Piccabean Palm- This is a fast growing palm that grows 30-50 feet tall. It likes a moist soil and a shady or partially shaded location. Piccabean Palm is a tender palm and best suited to the warmer or protected locations in Central Florida. It is native to the rainforests of eastern Australia. *Archontophoenix alexandrae*, the King Palm, is similar.
3. *Arenga engleri*- Clustering Sugar Palm- This is a clustering palm that grows 10- 12 feet tall. It bears inflorescences which contain orange flowers that are extremely fragrant. The fruits are bright red but are irritating to skin. It grows in sun or shade but looks best with some sun and needs moist soil. It is native to Taiwan. A form native to the Ryukyu Islands, southern Japan, grows smaller and is slightly cold hardier. It has recently been named a separate species, *Arenga ryukyuensis*.
4. *X Butiagrus nabonnandii*- Mule Palm- Mule Palm is a rare, intergeneric cross between the Pindo Palm, *Butia capitata*, and the Queen Palm, *Syagrus romanzoffiana*. These palms can vary greatly in appearance, possessing the best characteristics of each parent. It is usually a graceful palm growing 20-30 feet tall. Almost all the seeds produced by this palm are sterile. Wild hybrids of this palm can be found in southern Brazil where both parents occur naturally but most Mule Palms are hybrids produced in cultivation.
5. *Chamaedorea microspadix*- Bamboo Palm- This is a clustering species with slender stems that resemble bamboo. The clumps grow 8 to 10 feet tall. It also produces

bright red fruit several times a year. This colorful fruit contrasts nicely against the dark green leaves and stems. *Chamaedorea microspadix* needs shade and moist soil. It is native to eastern Mexico.

6. *Copernicia alba*- Caranday Palm- Caranday Palm is a very attractive palm that is well suited to Central Florida. It has a slender trunk, growing 30-40 feet tall, It likes full sun and is drought tolerant but can also tolerate wet soils. *Copernicia alba* is native from western Brazil to northeastern Argentina.
7. *Dypsis baronii*- This is an open clustering species with slender stems grow 10 to 15 feet tall. The stems have a bamboo look to them and often have a silvery wax coating. It grows in partial or full shade with moist, acidic soil. It resembles the common Areca or Golden Can Palm, *Dypsis lutescens*, but is not as a thickly clumping palm. It is also hardier to cold and grows well in the warmer areas of Central Florida. It is native to Madagascar.
8. *Licuala spinosa*- This is a clumping palm growing 10-15 feet tall. The palmate leaves are very attractive, have a circular shape but deeply segmented. It grows in part shade or shade with moist soil. It can tolerate very wet or swampy locations. It grows better in the warmer parts of Central Florida and is native to southeastern Asia.
9. *Livistona decora*- Ribbon Palm- This was formerly known as *Livistona decipiens*. It is an excellent but underutilized palm for Central Florida. It is fast growing, cold hardy and drought tolerant once established It grows 30-40 feet tall and likes sun or light shade. The leaves are deeply divided. Ribbon Palm makes an excellent replacement for the overused *Washingtonia robusta*, Mexican Fan Palm. It is native to Queensland, Australia.
10. *Livistona nitida*- Carnarvon Gorge Fan Palm- This palm is a moderate grower that can reach 30 to 50 feet tall. It grows in sun or light shade and likes moist soil. It is also cold hardy in central Florida. This palm is native to southeastern Queensland, Australia.
11. *Livistona saribus*- Taraw Palm- This 30-50 feet tall. The petioles contain large spines, which are very ornamental and resemble shark's teeth. It also bears brilliant blue colored fruit. It can grow in sun or shade and likes moist soil and is native to southeastern Asia. There is a form with reddish maroon petioles instead of green and is more tender to cold. This form was formerly called *L. hasseltii*.

12. ***Phoenix loureiroi***- A small neat palm that is rarely grown. Usually a single trunked palm but can form clusters. It grows 10-20 feet tall. The single trunked form resembles a smaller scale Canary Island Date Palm, *P. canariensis*. This palm grows in sun or light shade and is drought tolerant. It is native from a wide area from northern India to southern China and the Philippines. It has also formerly been known as *P. formosana*, *P. hanceana*, *P. humilis*, *P. robusta*, and *P. taiwaniana*.
  
13. ***Phoenix rupicola***- Cliff Date Palm- The Cliff Date Palm has a slender trunk reaching about 20 feet tall. The foliage is a bright shiny green with a soft texture. It is fairly drought tolerant but looks best when grown in a moist soil. It's cold hardiness is similar to the Pygmy Date Palm, *Phoenix roebelenii*. It is native to northern India.
  
14. ***Rhapidophyllum hystrix***- Needle Palm- Needle Palm is a small growing palm only reaching 3-6 feet tall. It usually grows in clusters but it can occasionally be seen with a single stem. The trunk is covered by fiber and long, black spines. It prefers a fairly moist soil and will grow in sun or shade, though it looks best with shade. Needle Palm is one of the most cold hardy of all the palms and has survived temperatures to 0°F. It is native from southern South Carolina to central Florida to southern Mississippi. It is very rare in habit and near extinction due to habitat loss and over collecting.
  
15. ***Sabal causiarum***- Hat Palmetto- Hat Palmetto is a large palm growing 30-50 feet tall. The stout trunks are thick and columnar. The leaves are used for making hats and baskets. This palm likes full sun and is drought tolerant. It is native to Puerto Rico and southern Hispaniola. *Sabal domingensis* is very similar.
  
16. ***Sabal minor***- Dwarf Palmetto- This native palm is usually trunkless, only growing 3 to 5 feet tall. It is very adaptable and should be more widely used. It grows in sun or shade, dry or wet soils and is very cold hardy. It is one of the hardiest of all the palms, surviving temperatures near 0 deg. F. It is native to the southeastern U.S. *Sabal etonia*, the Scrub Palmetto, is similar but has more folded leaves. It grows well on dry, sandy soil and is native to peninsular Florida.
  
17. ***Sabal uresana***- Sonoran Palmetto- This species of *Sabal* has distinct, silvery colored leaves. It can grow 40-50 feet tall and has a very thick trunk. It needs full sun and is very cold and drought tolerant. It is native to northwestern Mexico. This palm is a good choice for locations that are too cold to grow *Bismarckia nobilis*.

- 18. *Syagrus coronata*- Licuri Palm-** The Licuri Palm grows to about 30 feet tall. The old leaf bases often form spiraling rows along the trunk. It grows best in full sun and is drought tolerant. It is semi tender and best suited to the warmer sections of Central Florida. Licuri Palm is native to northeastern Brazil.
- 19. *Trachycarpus latisectus*- Windamere Palm-**This is a slender palm that grows 20-30 feet tall. It grows well in partial shade or shade with moist soil. Windemere Palm is native to northeastern India.
- 20. *Wallichia densiflora*-** This is a clustering palm that grows 6-10 feet tall. The pinnate leaves have leaflets that resemble a fishtail. They are dark green on the upper sides and very silvery underneath. It grows best in shade with moist soil. It is native northeastern India to southern China.