

ABOUT SABAL PALMS, THE STATE TREE OF FLORIDA

DO NOT DO THIS!

Except when transplanting*

GREEN FRONDS are the palm's source of nutrients! Cutting green fronds stunts growth, invites disease, and reduces the palm's natural resilience to high winds. Harsh pruning takes away food and shelter from native and migratory songbirds, woodpeckers, butterflies, honey bees, treefrogs, bats, anoles, squirrels, and other wildlife. Over-pruned palms may develop weakened trunks, which will eventually cause them to break off and die. Work boots with climbing spikes incur wounds in the trunk, leaving the palm prone to disease.

Palm fronds, berries, and boots: Brown fronds provide unique habitat for tree frogs and bats (chemical-free mosquito control). In nature, there is no waste. Recycle fallen palm fronds as mulch or a brush pile for wildlife. Palm berries are critical sources of highly nutritious food for many birds and other wildlife. Plant palms where berries and sprouts won't be a problem. Palm "boots" (the leafbases) are important habitat for other plants, including many beautiful rare and endangered ferns. Perhaps a better understanding of the palm's use by other creatures will enable us to see black fruits, brown fronds, and boots on the trunks as things of great value, if not beauty.



JUST SAY NO

to landscapers who want to prune green fronds, spring flowers and berries. Exclude annual harsh-pruning from your landscape contract.



THIS TREE has had its food supply severely restricted. Furthermore, its flowering branches have been removed, eliminating a vital source of nectar for insects + berries for birds.

ONLY WHEN ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY: Prune hanging brown and yellow fronds. Not the boots! Pole pruners work best. Prune stems away from the trunk.

Information sources include: University of Florida Extension Service; *Betrock's Guide to Landscape Palms*, by Alan Meerow; *An Illustrated Guide to Pruning*, by Delmar Publishers; *The Sabal Palm: A Native Monarch*, by Barbara Oehlbeck.
*The "hurricane cut" (fronds only, not the boots) is standard practice when preparing mature palms for transplanting.



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Sustaining the Sabal Palm, Signature of the Florida Skyline

FROM *CABBAGE PALMS, CAN WE CONTINUE TO TRANSPLANT FROM THE WILD?* BY RICHARD MOYROUD, *THE PALMETTO*, FALL 1996.

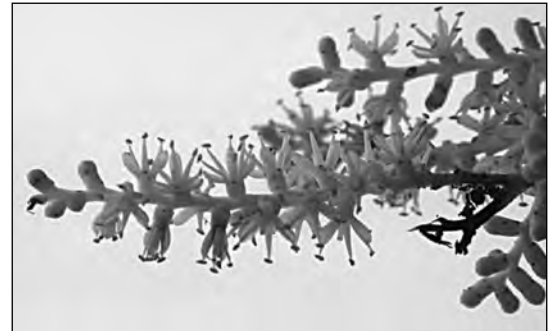
ONE OF THE MOST INTRIGUING QUESTIONS IN PALM BIOLOGY IS THE RATE OF growth of various species, especially in the wild. Age and growth rates of sabal palm have been studied by the University of Florida, and preliminary results indicate some startling news: under average conditions in the wild, plants require ten to fifteen years or more from seed to the first sign of a trunk at ground level; thereafter, trunks will grow about six inches per year. This means that a sabal palm with 20 feet of trunk is at least 50 years old! We often see trees in landscape jobs that are 30 or 40 feet tall, or 70 to 95 years old. All of these trees are being harvested from the wild on private lands, and the relatively low fee paid to the landowner does not reflect their true value. Will there be trees this old available a decade from now?

THE SABAL PALM is one of our most common and least appreciated native palms. *Sabal palmetto*, our state tree, is a medium-sized fan palm found throughout Florida (except for the interior of the Panhandle). Exceedingly drought tolerant, salt tolerant, cold hardy, pest and disease free, the sabal palm is a foolproof choice for any Florida landscape. It thrives on available rainfall and the meager nutrients found in Florida's sandy soils, making it a perfect choice for sustainable landscapes. This resilient tree endures fire, flood, freeze, and hurricane, and recovers remarkably well after being dug from the wild, carried across the state, and then planted into harsh urban sites. Our demand for sabal palms in landscape plantings is having a noticeable effect on wild populations, and we need to better understand the status and future of this stalwart native.

GROWING SABAL PALMS is a long slow process, requiring patience, persistence, and dedication to the future of Florida. FANN members are propagating sabal palm from seed, and both container-grown and field-grown plants are available and are being used as landscapers discover them. Very small sabal palms with less than three feet of trunk are almost impossible to transplant but are actually quite attractive at this size and usable in the landscape. Sabal palms of this size can be successfully moved from nurseries which have grown the plants in special fiber bags to confine the roots.



ECOSYSTEM IN A TREE: Seminole and Miccosukee Indians refer to the sabal palm as the "tree of life," for it has provided them shelter, food, tools, utensils, and fiber for baskets and netting. Sabal palm often hosts other plants in its "boots," including strangler fig, wild grape, virginia creeper, and a variety of beautiful threatened and endangered ferns. The sabal palm also shelters and supplies nesting material to bats, caracaras, cardinals, crows, doves, flycatchers, gnatcatchers, hawks, hummingbirds, kinglets, mockingbirds, shrikes, wrens, possums, raccoons, squirrels, snakes, tree frogs, lizards, and a variety of insects.



SMALL WHITE FRAGRANT FLOWERS are produced in large clusters and are a good nectar source for bees and butterflies. The black berries which follow are a critical food source for a variety of birds and small mammals.

FOR SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPES

Preserve existing sabal palms onsite, include them in your landscape design.

When clearing land for development, find a home for every palm. Sabal palms transplant beautifully, so there's no excuse for waste. Never burn or cut down valuable sabal palms.

Never prune green fronds and prune brown fronds only when absolutely necessary.

Plant palms where dropping fruit will not present a problem. If you're really visionary, consider educational signage that will help passersby see the fruit for the treasure it is!

Support sustainable growing practices by purchasing container and field-grown sabal palms.

Cabbage palm? The heart of the palm (the bud of unopened leaves) has traditionally been eaten as "swamp cabbage," hence the folksy names "cabbage palm" or "cabbage tree." Since removal of the bud kills the tree, swamp cabbage is now a rare delicacy best sampled by reading Florida history books.

The first three paragraphs on this page were taken directly from an article written by FANN member Richard Moyroud, owner of Mesozoic Landscapes, for *THE PALMETTO* (Florida Native Plant Society) and the August 1996 *LANDSCAPE & NURSERY DIGEST*, Betrock Information Systems. Remaining information was derived from a variety of sources including *THE SABAL PALM: A NATIVE MONARCH*, by BARBARA OEHLBECK, Gulfshore Press, Naples, 1997.