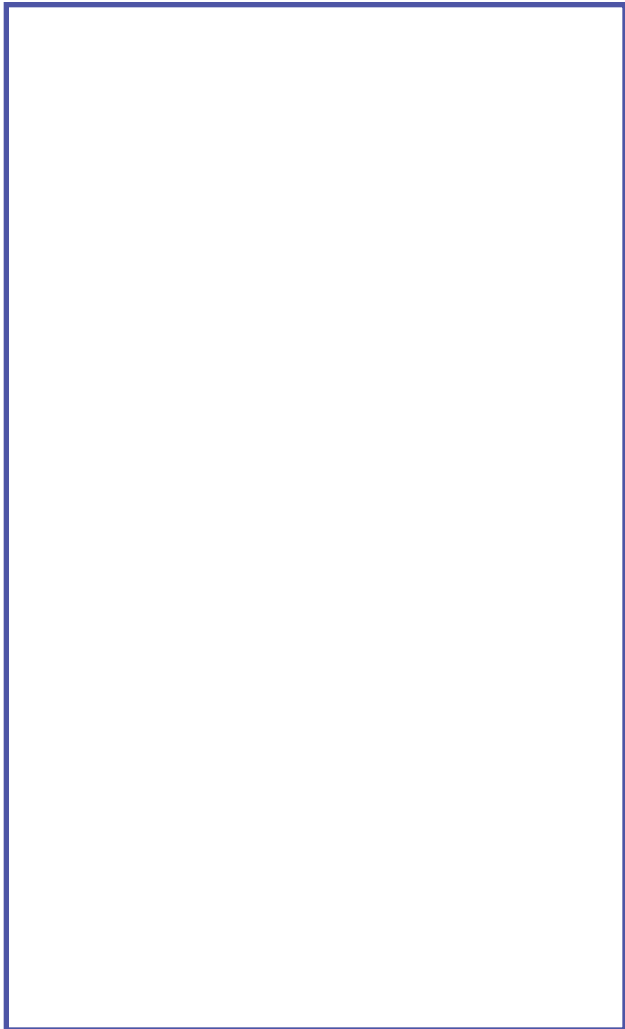
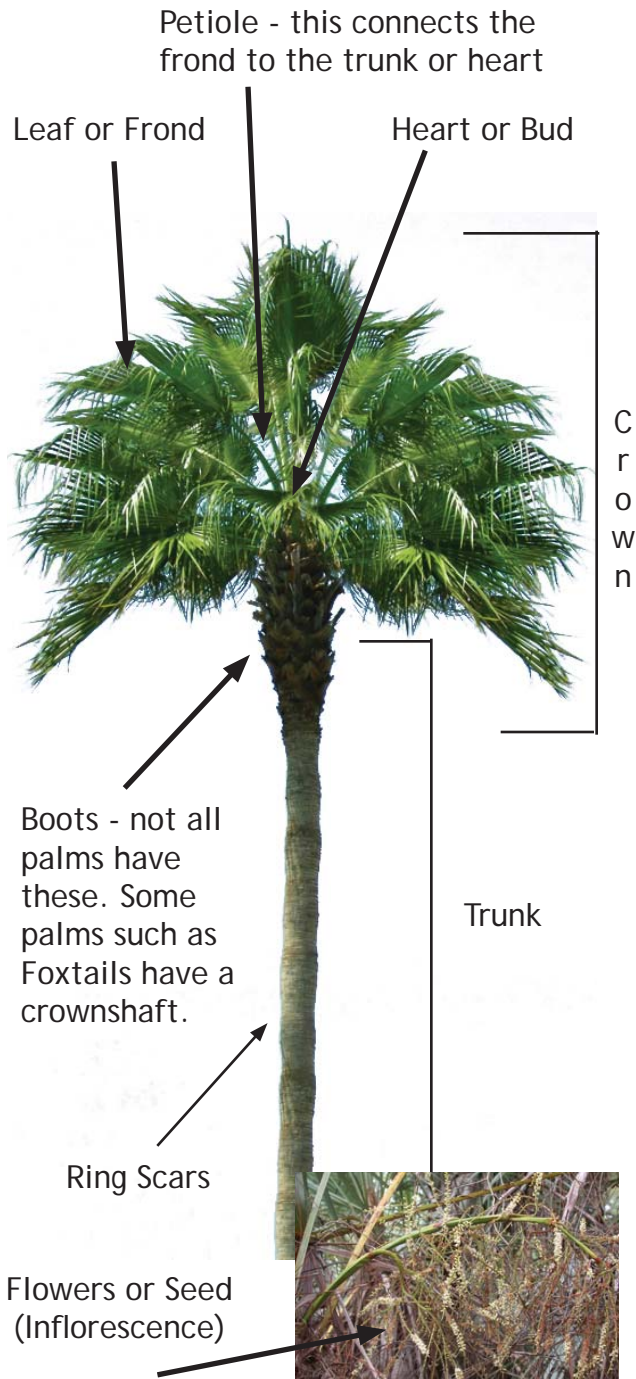


PALM ANATOMY



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HOW TO CARE FOR LANDSCAPE PALMS

*University of Florida IFAS
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PALM SELECTION

Selecting the right palm for the right place is the first step to maintaining a healthy palm. Select palms that will thrive in your soil type and pH.

A soil test can help you determine what will grow best in your soil. Contact your local Extension Office for more information about collecting soil samples for a soil test.

Know how tall your palm will grow. Too often palms are planted too close to buildings. When palm fronds rub against a building they provide a bridge for roof rats, ants, and other creatures that may cause damage to a structure or be a nuisance. Also, green fronds may be unnecessarily pruned, creating a number of problems, as we'll see later.



Two of these palms are planted too closely to the house. This problem may lead to over-pruning.

PALM NUTRITION

Properly fertilizing palms is one of the easiest things you can do to maintain healthy palms. Most palms are planted in sandy, nutrient deficient soils, which makes palms susceptible to serious nutritional problems. Some of the most common nutrient deficiencies include potassium, magnesium, manganese, and boron.

To prevent nutrient deficiencies, use a general, slow release fertilizer with micronutrients. We recommend a ratio of 8-2-12-4%Mg. Fertilizers with any other ratio may prove to be more harmful than helpful. The 8-2-12-4%Mg fertilizer is acceptable for use on all landscape plants including lawn grasses, so avoid using a lawn

fertilizer within 50 feet of the palm trunk--use the 8-2-12-4%Mg for lawn areas within this range.

Palms should be fertilized every three months at a rate of 1.5 lbs. of 8-2-12-4%Mg per 100 sq. ft. of palm canopy area, landscape bed area, or yard area. Spread the fertilizer evenly beneath the canopy of the palm. Avoid using fertilizer spikes or similar methods to fertilize since research has shown them to be ineffective.

PALM PRUNING

Palm pruning is one of the most misunderstood practices in landscape maintenance. Too many times the health of a palm is compromised by what is sometimes referred to as "hurricane pruning," which is the removal of the lower, green fronds.

Palms differ from woody trees (i.e., live oak) in many ways. One major way that they differ is in how they store nutrients. Woody trees and shrubs store excess nutrients in their woody trunks. Palms store nutrients in their older, green fronds. When palms are hurricane pruned, the lowest green fronds are removed, which deprives the palm of its stored nutrients and can result in severe nutrient deficiencies.

Harm may come to a palm in other ways too. Removal of green fronds exposes the tender heart (or bud) to wind, sun, and potentially cold temperatures in the

winter. Once the heart dies, the palm will die too.

Removing green fronds may also result in "encilpointing" of the trunk. This is indicated by a narrowing of the palm trunk. This can cause the palm to snap or break at the narrow point in a wind event.

Brown or dead fronds can be removed throughout the season, as well as flowers, seeds, or coconuts. Remove green fronds only when they are obstructing a view or rubbing against a building or structure.



Too many green fronds have been removed from this palm.



A correctly pruned palm

When removing a dead or diseased frond, make the cut close to the base of the petiole. Cut from the underside of the frond to avoid breaking the petiole or damaging the trunk.

Finally, avoid using spikes to climb palms. Spikes create holes in the trunk that never seal or heal. These holes are an open invitation to insects and diseases that can weaken or kill your palm.