



## **Queen Palms Affected by a New Mysterious Disease**

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Have you noticed any queen palms (*Syagrus romanzoffiana*) in your area that are rapidly declining or even dying? If so, you may be witnessing a new and mysterious disease that is attacking queen palms throughout south and central Florida.

This disease was first brought to the attention UF-IFAS researchers in Ft. Lauderdale in 2003. Thought to be isolated to just one county, researchers soon discovered that the disease was present throughout the southern half of Florida. Today, the disease has spread to central Florida including Brevard County.

Unfortunately, researchers have more questions than answers at this point, but they are working diligently to determine the identity of this disease and how to control it. We do know that the disease affects only queen palms. No insects have been associated with the symptoms and it is not nutritional.

The symptoms are as follows:

- The lowest (oldest) 2-3 fronds and petioles turn brown but do not hang down or fall off
- The next 2-3 fronds above the lower fronds will turn yellow.
- This pattern continues upward until the entire canopy turns brown.
- The bud does not die until the entire canopy has turned brown.
- The entire process takes only a few months.

Closer examination reveals other symptoms. The leaf tips may exhibit symptoms of drought. A cross-section of the petiole reveals internal discoloration, but not rot. There may be a brown-red stripe on the petiole beginning near the base of the trunk. In some cases one half of a frond may be green and the other half may be brown.

The symptoms of this disease differ from potassium deficiency. The petioles will be green and the fronds will be brown on a potassium deficient palm; the petioles and the fronds will be brown on a palm suffering from the mystery disease.

At this time IFAS recommends removing infected palms as soon as possible and not replanting with another queen palm. Sterilizing pruning tools may help reduce the spread of this disease.

More information including photographs of symptoms may be found at:  
[http://flrec.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/Plant\\_pathology/plant.htm](http://flrec.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/Plant_pathology/plant.htm).

Source: Monica Elliot, Ph.D., New disease of queen palms (*Syagrus romanzoffiana*) in the South Florida landscape, May 2006.