

# *Caryota* spp.: Fishtail Palm<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

This clump-growing group of palms has medium green leaf blades which are divided into many segments, each of which resembles the tail of a fancy goldfish. Rarely exceeding 25 feet in height, a number of species of fishtail palms produce suckers from the base creating a very attractive specimen palm. Its neat habit makes it ideal for use at poolside, in urns or other containers, and it is often seen in well-lit interiorscapes where its distinct form lends a tropical effect. It can be used as a house plant in large homes with plenty of light.

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Caryota* spp.

**Pronunciation:** kair-ee-OH-tuh species

**Common name(s):** Fishtail Palm

**Family:** *Arecaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Invasive potential:** little invasive potential

**Uses:** indoors; specimen; deck or patio; container or planter; screen

**Availability:** not native to North America

## Description

**Height:** 15 to 25 feet

**Spread:** 10 to 15 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular

**Crown shape:** palm, upright/erect

**Crown density:** moderate

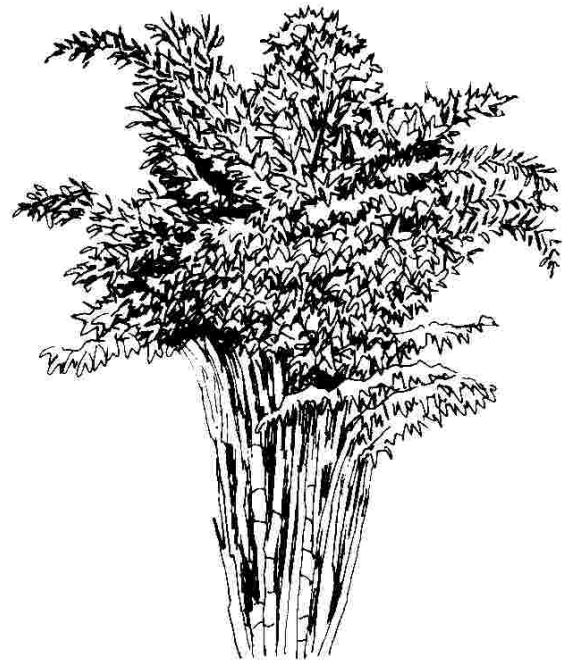


Figure 1. Mature *Caryota* spp.: Fishtail Palm

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** coarse

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** spiral (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** odd-pinnately compound

**Leaf margin:** incised

**Leaf shape:** obovate

**Leaf venation:** reticulate

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Figure 2. Range

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches, 4 to 8 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** white/cream/gray

**Flower characteristics:** not showy

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** less than .5 inch

**Fruit covering:** unknown

**Fruit color:** brown

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** branches don't droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns

**Pruning requirement:** little required

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** not applicable

**Current year twig thickness:**

**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

### Culture

**Light requirement:** full sun, partial sun or partial shade, shade tolerant

**Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** low

### Other

**Roots:** not a problem

**Winter interest:** no

**Outstanding tree:** no

**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** resistant

**Pest resistance:** sensitive to pests/diseases

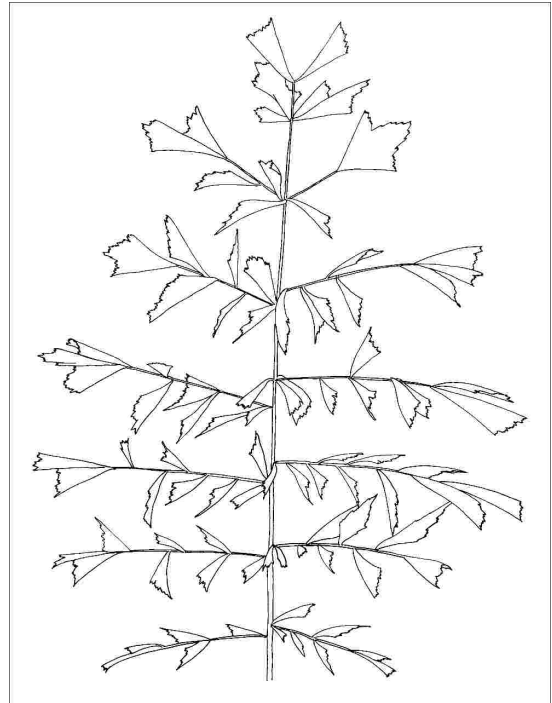


Figure 3. Foliage

## Use and Management

Fishtail Palms can thrive in light conditions from full sun to deep shade, requiring only that its soil be well-drained and reasonably fertile. It has a moderate to rapid growth rate and should be located outdoors in a sheltered location protected from cold. Unfortunately, the palm is susceptible to lethal yellowing disease. In addition, it is monocarpic so a stem dies after it flowers. This stem must be removed to maintain a neat appearance. There are a variety of other species grown in south Florida nurseries.

Propagation is by seeds or division.

### Pests

Red spider mites and scales are serious problems, especially when fishtail palms are used indoors.

### Diseases

Lethal yellowing disease.