

Phoenix canariensis: Canary Island Date Palm¹

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Introduction

This large, stately palm often reaches a size too massive for most residential landscapes but, fortunately, it is very slow-growing and will take a considerable amount of time to reach its 50 to 60-foot-height. Canary Island Date Palm is most impressive with its single, upright, thick trunk topped with a crown of 8 to 15-foot-long, stiff leaves with extremely sharp spines at their bases. The stalks of inconspicuous flowers are replaced with clusters of one-inch-diameter,



Figure 1. Mature *Phoenix canariensis*: Canary Island Date Palm

orange-yellow, date-like, ornamental fruits which ripen in early summer. The trunk can reach a diameter of four feet and is covered with an attractive, diamond-shaped pattern from old leaf scars.

General Information

Scientific name: *Phoenix canariensis*

Pronunciation: FEE-nicks kan-air-ee-EN-sis

Common name(s): Canary Island Date Palm

Family: *Arecaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 9A through 11 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: urban tolerant; street without sidewalk; specimen; parking lot island < 100 sq ft; parking lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; sidewalk cutout (tree

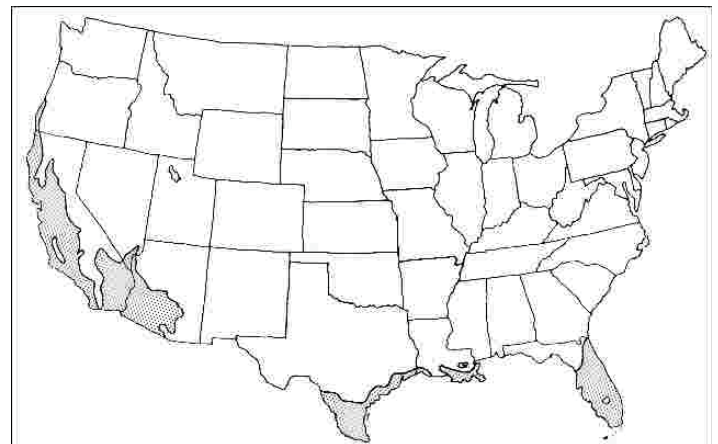


Figure 2. Range

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pit); tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; highway median

Availability: not native to North America

Description

Height: 40 to 60 feet

Spread: 20 to 25 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: palm, upright/erect

Crown density: open

Growth rate: slow

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: spiral (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: odd-pinnately compound

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: linear

Leaf venation: parallel

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 12 to 18 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: oval, round

Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: orange, yellow

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches don't droop; showy; typically one trunk; 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

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

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: yes

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: resistant

Pest resistance: sensitive to pests/diseases

Use and Management

Canary Island Date Palm should be grown in full sun on fertile, moist soil for best growth but is tolerant of any well-drained soil. It can be planted on the inland side of coastal condominiums and large homes due to moderately high salt-tolerance. It does well as a street or avenue tree, even in confined soil spaces. Canary Island Date Palm will require pruning to remove old fronds. Older leaves frequently become chlorotic from magnesium or potassium-deficiency. Preventive applications of appropriate fertilizer helps avoid this. Avoid damage to the trunk by locating it properly in the landscape and keeping landscape maintenance equipment away. Damaged trees are susceptible to Ganoderma rot.

Only prune fronds which hang below the horizontal. Do not remove those growing upright since this may slow the growth and reduce vigor.

Propagation is by seed.

Pests

Giant palm weevil can kill recently transplanted palms or those which are injured. Once in the palm, remedial control is not possible. Preventing injury is the best way to avoid the weevil. Some landscape managers conduct a preventive spray program following transplanting on these highly valued palms until they are well-established in the landscape.

Palm leaf skeletonizer devours leaves.

A variety of scale insects infest this palm.

Diseases

Mildly susceptible to lethal yellowing disease and leaf spot.

Stressed and damaged trees often are infected with the Ganoderma fungus. A conk is formed at the base of the tree which appears as a varnished shelf or mushroom. Remove the conk and the tree to help control the spread of the disease to other plants. Prevent injury to the trunk and roots, and plant in well-drained soil. Be sure sprinklers do not irrigate the trunk so it remains wet. A wet trunk and wet soil encourage this disease. There is no control for butt rot, only prevention.