

# Phoenix reclinata: Senegal Date Palm<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

This striking palm creates an interesting silhouette with its multiple, gracefully curved, often reclining, slender brown trunks, and dense crowns of stiff but feathery leaf fronds. Old frond bases are medium brown and remain on the trunk forming a showy trunk which is attractive all year long. A mature specimen of Senegal Date Palm can reach 35 feet in height with a 12 to 20-foot-spread and creates a striking tree which casts a light shade. The palm is elegant when lit from below at night. It is best used as an accent for large landscapes and parks. The somewhat showy flower

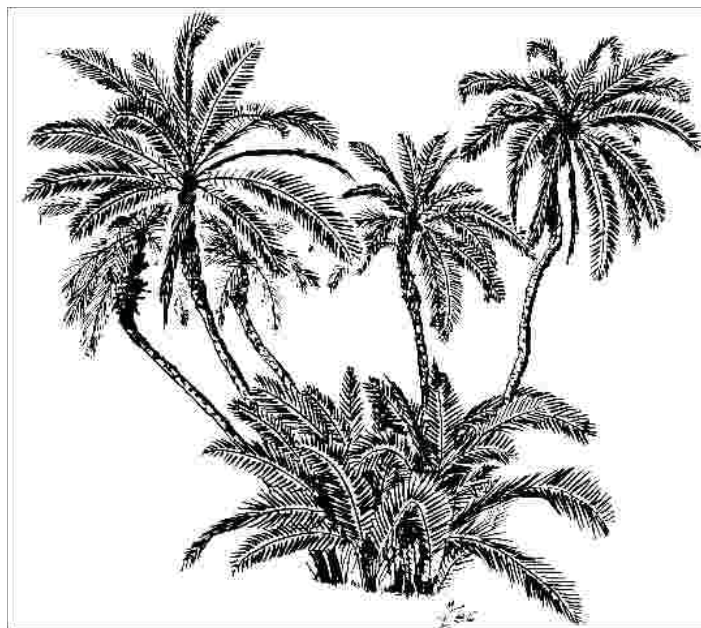


Figure 1. Middle-aged *Phoenix reclinata*: Senegal Date Palm

stalks, often lost within the thick foliage, are followed by one-inch-long, bright orange dates which are incredibly showy. These can be very attractive, particularly when viewed from a balcony above the tree.

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Phoenix reclinata*

**Pronunciation:** FEE-nicks reck-lih-NAY-tuh

**Common name(s):** Senegal Date Palm

**Family:** *Arecaceae*

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

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Invasive potential:** According to the IFAS Assessment of the Status of Non-Native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas (Fox *et al.* 2005), *Phoenix reclinata* (Senegal date palm) is: invasive and not recommended for use in the southern

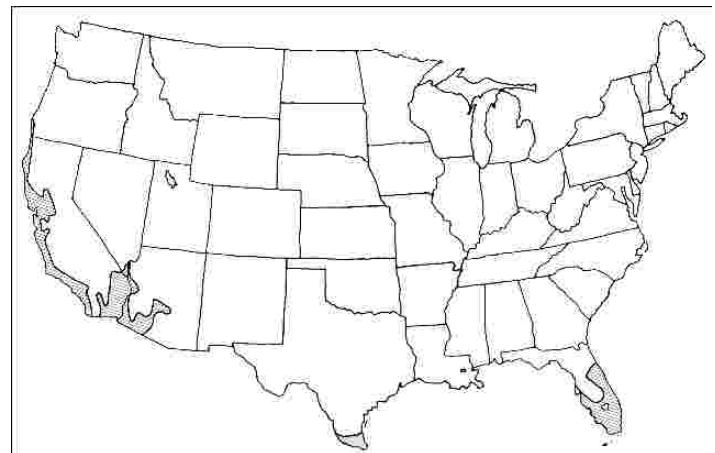


Figure 2. Range

1. This document is ENH-599, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date November 1993. Revised April 2007. Reviewed May 2011. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, former associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611.

zone of Florida. To see if any exceptions for specified and limited use have been approved since publication, check the Conclusions table at <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/assessment>; it is not considered a problem species and may be used in the northern and central zones in Florida (counties are listed by zone at <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/assessment>)

**Uses:** specimen; container or planter

**Availability:** not native to North America

## Description

**Height:** 25 to 35 feet

**Spread:** 12 to 20 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular

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

**Crown density:** open

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** medium

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (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:** showy

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** orange

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

## Trunk and Branches

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

**Pruning requirement:** needed for strong structure

**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

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

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**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

The multiple trunks lose older fronds as the palm grows, clearing lower trunks of all foliage. This characteristic makes Senegal Date Palm a wonderful tree for accenting in a bed of groundcover or a grouping of low shrubs. Trunks which bend to the horizontal as the palm ages may need to be supported with a brace or cable to hold them up.

Growing easily in full sun or partial shade, Senegal Date Palm will thrive on any well-drained soil. Plants should receive adequate moisture during periods of drought. This palm is too large for all but the largest residential landscapes. They are very costly to purchase due to the slow growth rate. Large specimens command a high price.

Propagation is by seed or division of the many suckers which appear at the base of old clumps.

## Pests

A variety of scales infest this palm.

## Diseases

Some diseases of this tree are lethal yellowing disease, 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.