

Phoenix roebelenii: Pygmy Date Palm¹

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Introduction

One of the finest of the dwarf palms, Pygmy Date Palm slowly reaches 6 to 12 feet in height and has an upright or curving, single trunk topped with a dense, full crown of gracefully arching, three-foot-long leaves. The insignificant flower clusters, hidden by the foliage, are present periodically throughout the year and produce small, jet-black dates which ripen to a deep red. Pygmy Date Palm is quite popular as a specimen planting or in containers, especially



Figure 1. Middle-aged *Phoenix roebelenii*: Pygmy Date Palm

attractive at poolside. It is usually used as a single specimen although it is also effective in groups of three or more.

General Information

Scientific name: *Phoenix roebelenii*

Pronunciation: FEE-nicks roe-beh-LEN-nee-eye

Common name(s): Pygmy Date Palm

Family: *Arecaceae*

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

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

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

Availability: not native to North America

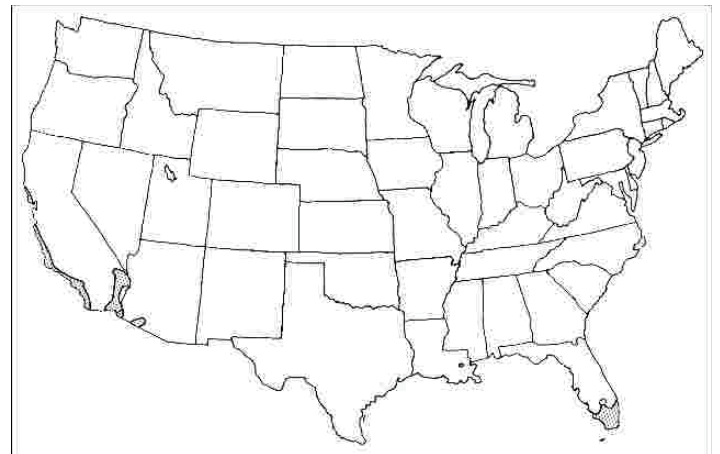


Figure 2. Range

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Description

Height: 6 to 12 feet
Spread: 6 to 10 feet
Crown uniformity: irregular
Crown shape: palm, upright/erect
Crown density: open
Growth rate: slow
Texture: fine

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: 8 to 12 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: .5 to 1 inch
Fruit covering: fleshy
Fruit color: red, black
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; not 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, partial sun or partial shade
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; acidic; slightly alkaline; 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: resistant to pests/diseases

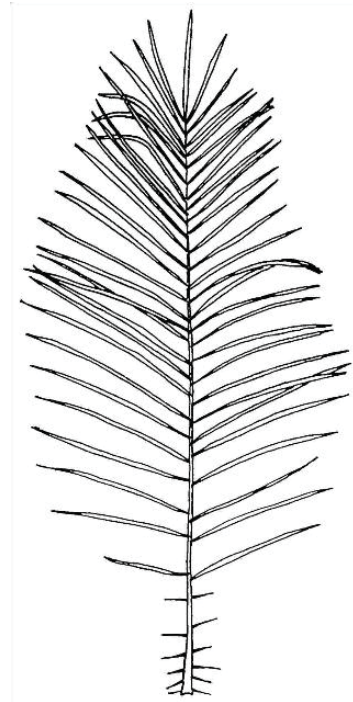


Figure 3. Foliage

Use and Management

Pygmy Date Palm should only be grown in frost-free areas in sun or shade on well-drained soils. Plants should be regularly watered. Magnesium or potassium deficiency symptoms (chlorotic and spotted older fronds) often develop on the older leaves when grown in soils with a pH above 7. It has some salt tolerance, surviving on the inland side of coastal condominiums.

Propagation is by seed.

Pests

Palm leaf skeletonizer and a large number of scales can infest this palm.

Diseases

Leaf spot and bud rot are two diseases which can infect this palm.