

# Roystonea spp.: Royal Palm<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Notably popular as street or specimen trees, Royal Palms make a neat, tidy, yet stately landscape element for large landscapes, often reaching 50 to 100 feet in height in almost as many years. The tall, smooth, cement grey trunks are capped with a glossy, green crown shaft several feet high and a beautiful, broad, dense crown of soft, gently drooping, feathery fronds. Flowers are incredibly fragrant, even from 50 feet away and are produced periodically throughout the year but mostly in summer. The old fronds should be removed before they drop since they can cause injury or damage to plants or property when allowed to fall. One frond will fall about every month.

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Roystonea* spp.

**Pronunciation:** roy-STOW-nee-uh species

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

**Family:** *Arecaceae*

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

**Origin:** native to North America

**Invasive potential:** little invasive potential

**Uses:** street without sidewalk; specimen; parking lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; urban tolerant; highway median

**Availability:** not native to North America

## Description

**Height:** 50 to 80 feet

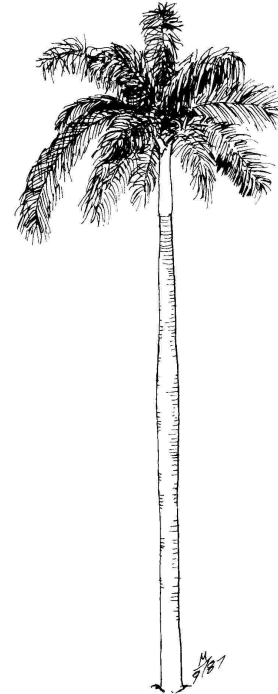


Figure 1. Mature *Roystonea* spp.: Royal Palm

**Spread:** 15 to 25 feet

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical

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

**Crown density:** open

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** coarse

## Foliage

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

1. This document is ENH-732, 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 December 2006. Reviewed May 2011. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

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Figure 2. Range

**Leaf type:** odd-pinnately compound  
**Leaf margin:** entire  
**Leaf shape:** lanceolate  
**Leaf venation:** parallel  
**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen  
**Leaf blade length:** 18 to 36 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** no color change  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** yellow  
**Flower characteristics:** showy

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** oval, round  
**Fruit length:** less than .5 inch  
**Fruit covering:** fleshy  
**Fruit color:** purple, black  
**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves 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; occasionally wet; 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:** resistant to pests/diseases

## Use and Management

Royal Palms grow quite rapidly when given an abundance of water and fertilizer in full sun or dappled shade. They withstand strong winds and salt spray very well but some foliage injury will be evident on Royal Palm located next to the ocean. It is not really suited for beach side planting as Sabal Palm is. The young developing fronds grow in a distorted, frizzled manner in alkaline soil. This is usually attributed to manganese or iron deficiency in the leaves. It can be prevented with regular applications of a suitable fertilizer or by planting in soil with a pH less than about 7.5.

*Roystonea elata* is native to Florida and *Roystonea regia* to Cuba. Cuban Royal Palm has less prominent secondary leaf veins and nearly globose fruit. Many nurseries do not distinguish between these two species since they are very similar.

Propagation is by seed.

### Pests

Some of Royal Palm's pests are palm leaf skeletonizer, Royal Palm bug, giant palm weevil, and scales when young. Any of these can be troublesome in localized areas.

### Diseases

Ganoderma butt rot is the most serious problem on Royal Palms. It kills trees which it infects. The disease often enters the trunk through injuries on the lower trunk and roots.