

Thrinax morrisii: Key Thatch Palm¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

Introduction

This native North American palm slowly grows 20 to 30 feet tall, its smooth, slender trunk topped with 3.5-foot-wide, beautiful, green and silver fronds. The fronds are a shimmering silver/white underneath and are a source for thatch. The insignificant white spring flowers are followed by small, round, fleshy white fruits.

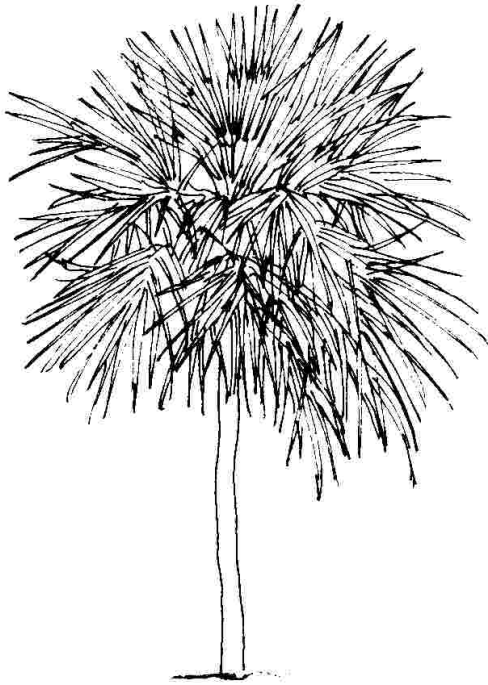


Figure 1. Middle-aged *Thrinax morrisii*: Key Thatch Palm

General Information

Scientific name: *Thrinax morrisii*

Pronunciation: THRY-nacks more-ISS-ee-eye

Common name(s): Key Thatch Palm

Family: *Arecaceae*

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

Origin: native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: deck or patio; container or planter; specimen; highway median

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree



Figure 2. Range

1. This document is ENH-786, 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>.
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.

Description

Height: 15 to 20 feet

Spread: 6 to 10 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: palm, upright/erect

Crown density: open

Growth rate: slow

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: star-shaped

Leaf venation: palmate

Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen, evergreen

Leaf blade length: 18 to 36 inches

Leaf color: green, blue or blue-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: fleshy

Fruit color: white/gray

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

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches don't droop; not 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; alkaline; acidic; occasionally wet; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: high

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: yes

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: resistant

Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases

Use and Management

This palm is small enough to be popular in residential landscapes. It is often planted as a single specimen or in groups of three to accent an area. Due to the coarse texture, they make a nice entryway palm planted to attract attention to the front door of a building. It often looks best planted in a mulched area or in a bed with a low-growing ground cover.

Key Thatchpalm should be grown in full sun or partial shade and is highly drought- and salt-tolerant, making it ideal for seaside applications.

Propagation is by seed.

Pests

No pests are of major concern.

Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.