



Veitchia merrillii Christmas Palm¹

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INTRODUCTION

This stocky, single-trunked palm with stiffly arched, six-foot-long, bright green fronds is noted for the fall and winter appearance of the very showy clusters of glossy, bright red fruits which hang below the leaves at the base of the crown shaft (Fig. 1). Reaching 25 feet in height, though often much smaller, Christmas Palm has a very neat appearance and is well-suited to use as a patio, terrace, specimen, or framing tree. Unfortunately, the palm is very susceptible to lethal yellowing disease and probably should not be planted. Fortunately, there are other *Veitchia* resistant to the disease, including *Veitchia macdanielsi* and *Veitchia montgomeryana*, but these are much taller palms with thicker trunks.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Veitchia merrillii*

Pronunciation: VEE-chee-uh mer-RILL-ee-eye

Common name(s): Christmas Palm, Manila Palm

Family: *Arecaceae*

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

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; suitable for growing indoors; near a deck or patio; specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

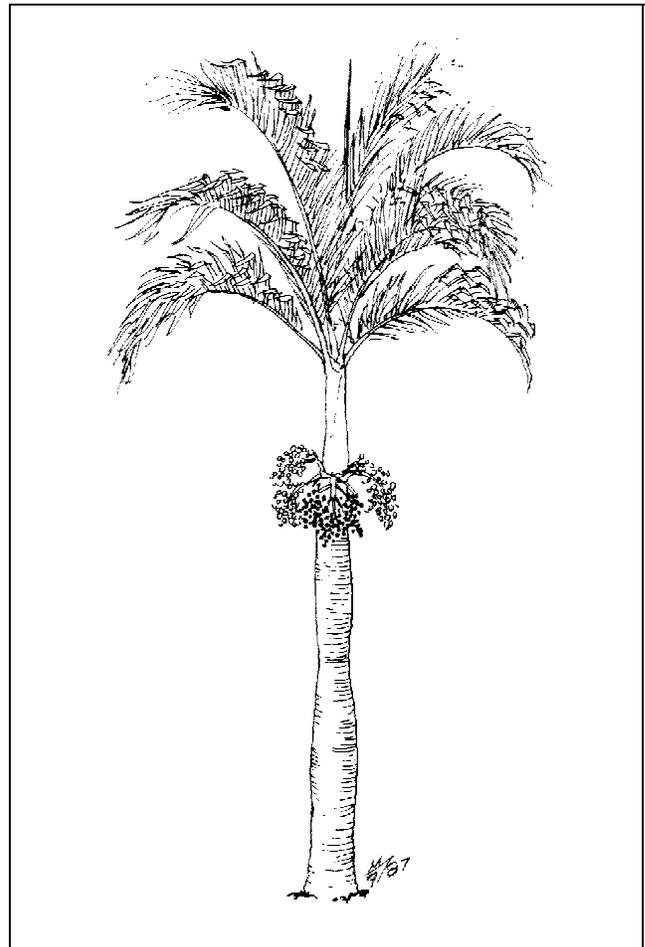


Figure 1. Middle-aged Christmas Palm.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 20 to 30 feet

Spread: 10 to 15 feet

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

Crown shape: palm; upright

Crown density: open

Growth rate: medium

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate; spiral

Leaf type: odd pinnately compound

Leaflet margin: entire

Leaflet shape: lanceolate

Leaflet venation: parallel

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaflet blade length: 12 to 18 inches; 8 to 12 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white; yellow

Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: red

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; persistent on the tree; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns

Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Crown shaft: yes

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun;
tree grows in full sun

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

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: tree has winter interest due to
unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter
trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: not known to be
susceptible

Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests
or diseases which can affect tree health or aesthetics

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Christmas Palm should receive some shade while young but will grow in full sun when older on a wide variety of well-drained soils, including limestone soils. Trees should only be used in frost-free areas. Consider substituting one of the *Veitchia* mentioned above, the Carpentaria Palm, *Ptychosperma macarthurii*, or a variety of other palms resistant to lethal yellowing disease.

Propagation is by seed.

Pests

Scales can infest and spoil young palms.

Diseases

It is very susceptible to lethal yellowing disease.