



Beaucarnea recurvata Ponytail¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

INTRODUCTION

This upright, fine-textured evergreen tree grows very slowly up to 30 feet in height but rarely exceeds 10 feet (Fig. 1). A distinctive plant, ponytail palm has a greatly swollen trunk base (sometimes to seven feet across) which narrowly tapers and eventually branches in older specimens. The light green leaves, up to five feet long and 3/4 of an inch wide, are produced in tufts clustered at the tips of branches. The cascading nature of the leaves gives much the appearance of a pony's tail. Creamy yellow flowers are quite showy as they are held above the foliage in spring or summer for several weeks. The tree will occasionally flower two or even three times a year. This plant makes a great conversation piece, whether grown as a specimen, a container plant, near patios, or placed in rock gardens. It can also be used as a houseplant.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Beaucarnea recurvata*

Pronunciation: boe-KAR-nee-uh reck-er-VAY-tuh

Common name(s): Ponytail

Family: *Agavacea*

USDA hardiness zones: 10 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

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

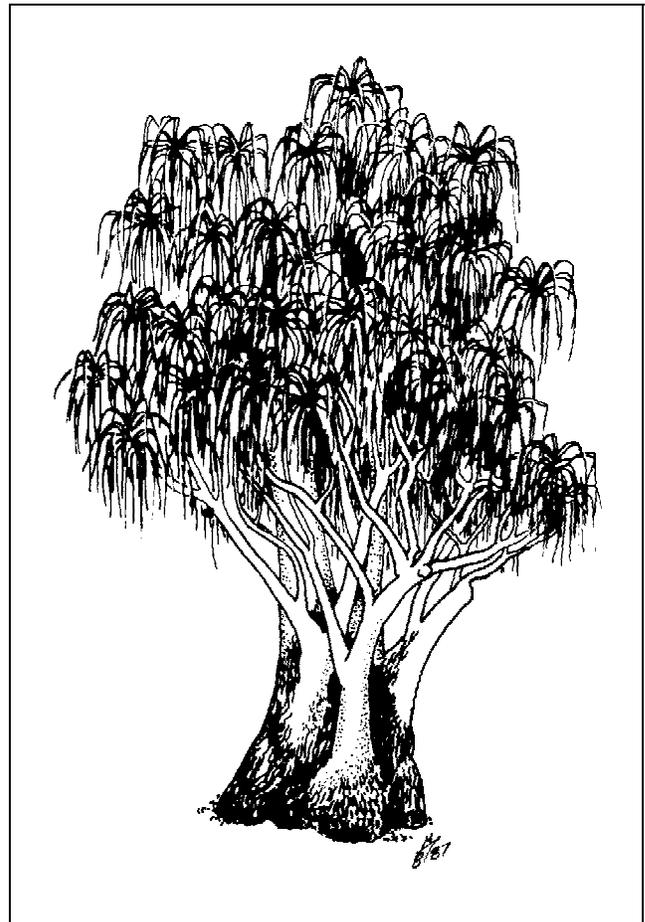


Figure 1. Mature Ponytail.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 12 to 18 feet

Spread: 10 to 15 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-93, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.
2. Edward F. Gilman, associate professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Crown shape: palm; upright
Crown density: open
Growth rate: slow
Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: spiral
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: serrate
Leaf shape: linear
Leaf venation: parallel
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 18 to 36 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white; yellow
Flower characteristics: spring flowering; summer flowering; very showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated
Fruit length: < .5 inch
Fruit covering: dry or hard
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; no thorns
Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: gray
Current year twig thickness: stout

Culture

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

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

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

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

Pest resistance: no pests are normally seen on the tree

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Ponytail palm grows in full sun or partial shade on a wide range of soils. Soil must have good drainage as plants have a tendency to develop root rot on poorly-drained soils. Plants moved from indoors to permanent outside locations should be gradually exposed to the increase in light and temperature change.

Propagation is by seed, which usually must be imported from Mexico.

Pests

Chewing insects may disfigure the leaves.

Diseases

Root rots can kill plants grown on wet soils.