



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 (Fig. 1). 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 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: 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; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

DESCRIPTION

Height: 6 to 12 feet

Spread: 6 to 10 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: palm; upright

Crown density: open



Figure 1. Middle-aged Pygmy Date Palm.

Growth rate: slow

Texture: fine

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate; spiral (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: odd pinnately compound

Leaflet margin: entire

Leaflet shape: linear

Leaflet venation: parallel

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaflet blade length: 8 to 12 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: black; red

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

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: no

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: low

Soil salt tolerance: poor

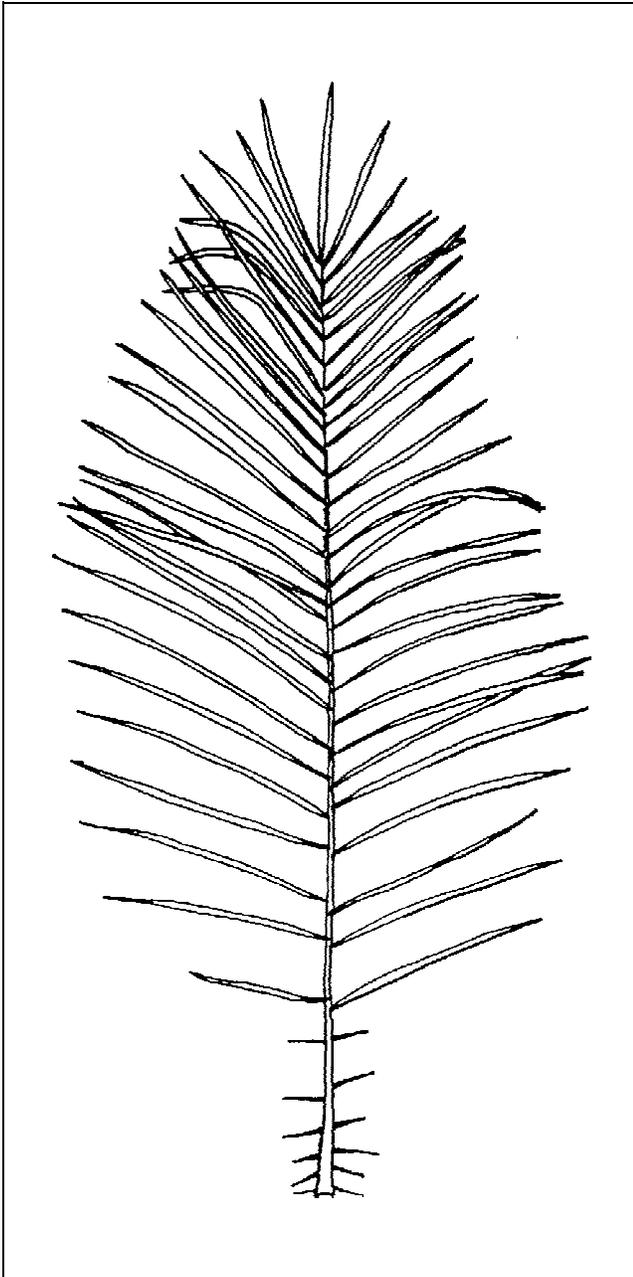


Figure 3. Foliage of Pygmy Date Palm.

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.

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

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: not known to be susceptible

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests