Sabal etonia

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Introduction

The Scrub Palmetto, along with the Dwarf Palmetto has a subterranean stem that is frequently S-shaped or contorted; the crown bud is held below the soil surface. The height of this palm varies from 3 to 4 feet, and there are generally 5 to 8 living palm leaves present at any given time. The leaf blades are simple with deep, palmate lobes, with a bifurcate (Y-shaped split) tip. The inflorescence is half as long or as long as the leaves and bear small, white flowers in the spring. The flowers are followed by small, shiny black berries.

General Information

Scientific name: Sabal etonia
Pronunciation: SAY-bull ee-TOE-nee-uh
Common name(s): Scrub Palmetto
Family: Palmae
Plant type: palm
USDA hardiness zones: 9 through 11 (Fig. 1)
Planting month for zone 9: year round
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round
Origin: native to Florida
Uses: accent; border
Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

Description

Height: 3 to 6 feet
Spread: 3 to 5 feet
Plant habit: palm; round

Plant density: open
Growth rate: slow
Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: lobed
Leaf shape: star-shaped
Leaf venation: palmate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: more than 36 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white
Flower characteristic: spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: less than .5 inch
Fruit cover: fleshy
Fruit color: black
Fruit characteristic: attracts birds

Trunk and Branches
Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Trunk/bark/branches: usually with one stem/trunk; not particularly showy
Current year stem/twig color: not applicable
Current year stem/twig thickness: not applicable

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun
Soil tolerances: acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay;
Drought tolerance: high
Soil salt tolerances: moderate
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

The Scrub Palmetto is not common in the trade but could be used in the landscape as a massed ground cover. They are especially effective in the shade of existing pine trees. One or two could be planted in a small landscape as specimens to add texture to the garden.

This palm, like the Dwarf Palmetto, should have a full sun to partial shade position in the landscape. The plant is adaptable to many soil types as long as they are well-drained, and it is drought tolerant.

The Scrub Palmetto is propagated from the small, dark brown seeds found inside the black fruits.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.