



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Zamia floridana*¹

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Introduction

This native of Florida is also known erroneously as *Zamia pumila* (Fig. 1). The feather-like, light green, leathery foliage of Coontie emerges from a large underground storage root in the early years before a trunk develops. Providing a tropical landscape effect, Coontie's unique growth habit is ideally suited for use as a specimen or container planting. It looks particularly attractive when plants of differing sizes are planted together to form a clumping, specimen-like effect. Planted on 3 to 5-foot-centers for a massing effect, it forms a 3-foot-tall, medium-green ground cover. Coontie are rarely used in this manner because of the high cost of plants, but it is well worth the effort. This plant should be used more in the landscape.

General Information

Scientific name: *Zamia floridana*

Pronunciation: ZAY-mee-uh flor-rid-DAY-nuh

Common name(s): Coontie

Family: *Zamiaceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 8B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: native to Florida

Uses: border; mass planting; accent; attracts butterflies; suitable for growing indoors

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

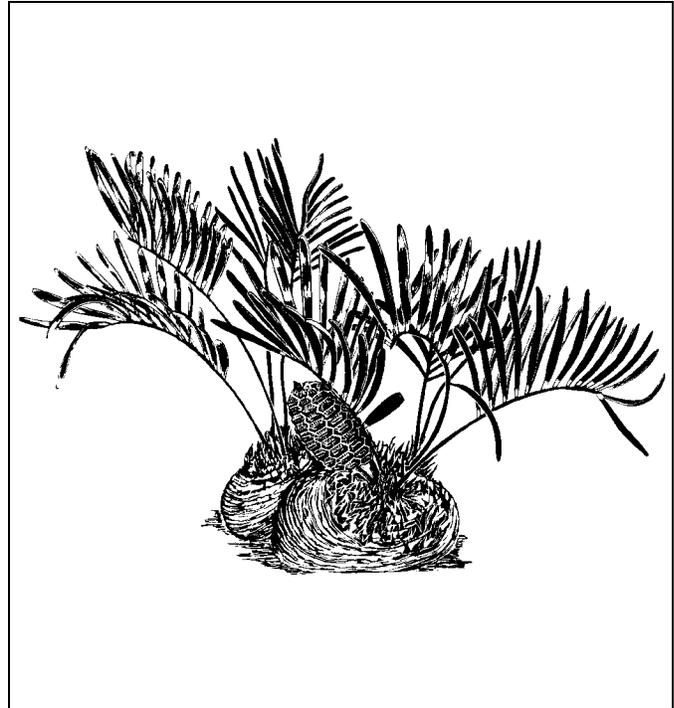


Figure 1. Coontie.

Description

Height: 2 to 4 feet

Spread: 3 to 5 feet

Plant habit: round

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: slow

Texture: fine

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

- Leaf arrangement:** spiral
- Leaf type:** even-pinnately compound
- Leaf margin:** revolute; serrate
- Leaf shape:** linear
- Leaf venation:** parallel
- Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen
- Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches
- Leaf color:** green
- Fall color:** no fall color change
- Fall characteristic:** not showy

Flower

- Flower color:** no flowers
- Flower characteristic:** no flowers

Fruit

- Fruit shape:** elongated
- Fruit length:** 3 to 6 inches
- Fruit cover:** dry or hard
- Fruit color:** red

Fruit characteristic: showy

Trunk and Branches

- Trunk/bark/branches:** not particularly showy; usually with one stem/trunk
- 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:** alkaline; sand; acidic; loam
- Drought tolerance:** high
- Soil salt tolerances:** good
- Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Growing best with some shade, Coontie can tolerate full sun and grows on a variety of soils as long as it is well-drained. Watering should be done with moderation, if at all, once established. But like any plant, plenty of water is needed following transplanting.

Propagation is usually difficult by seed, and growth is very slow.

Pest problems include sooty mold, mealy bugs, and scale. Florida red scale must be controlled by regular spraying as it can be fatal to coontie. The alata caterpillar feeds only on the Coontie. It devours foliage at a rapid rate for about two weeks and then disappears. Plants look fine after new foliage appears.

Pests and Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.

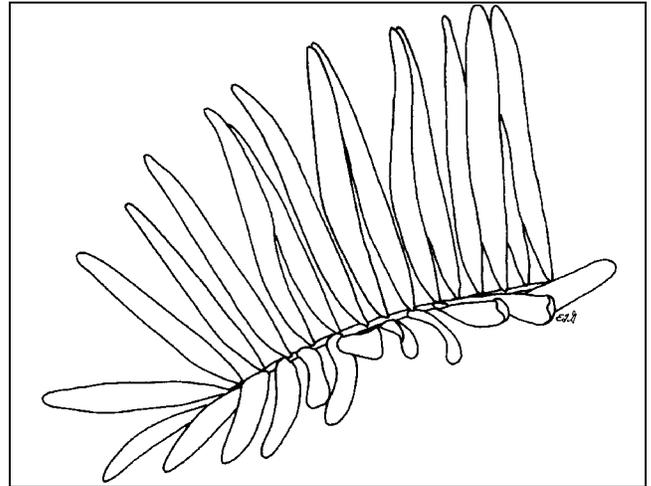


Figure 3. Foliage of Coontie