



Thrinax morrisii Key Thatch Palm¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

INTRODUCTION

This native North American palm slowly grows 20 to 30 feet tall, its smooth, slender trunk topped with 3 (Fig. 1).5-foot-wide, beautiful, green and silver fronds. The fronds are a shimmering silver/white underneath and are a source for thatch. The insignificant white spring flowers are followed by small, round, fleshy white fruits.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Thrinax morrisii*

Pronunciation: THRY-nacks more-ISS-ee-eye

Common name(s): Key Thatch Palm

Family: *Arecaceae*

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

Origin: native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

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

DESCRIPTION

Height: 15 to 20 feet

Spread: 6 to 10 feet

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: slow

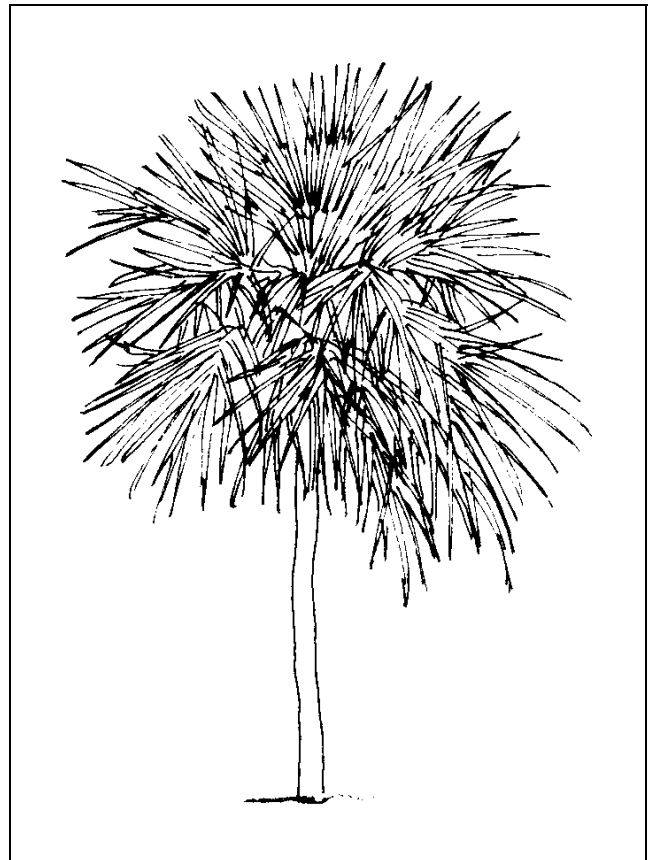


Figure 1. Middle-aged Key Thatch Palm.

Texture: coarse

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-628, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1994.
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.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate; spiral

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: star-shaped

Leaf venation: palmate

Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen;
evergreen

Leaf blade length: 18 to 36 inches

Leaf color: blue or blue-green; 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 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: white

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; no
significant litter problem; persistent on the tree; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: grow mostly upright and will
not droop; not particularly showy; 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; acidic;
occasionally wet; alkaline; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: high

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

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

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

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: not known to be susceptible

Pest resistance: no pests are normally seen on the tree

USE AND MANAGEMENT

This palm is small enough to be popular in residential landscapes. It is often planted as a single specimen or in groups of three to accent an area. Due to the coarse texture, they make a nice entryway palm planted to attract attention to the front door of a building. It often looks best planted in a mulched area or in a bed with a low-growing ground cover.

Key Thatchpalm should be grown in full sun or partial shade and is highly drought- and salt-tolerant, making it ideal for seaside applications.

Propagation is by seed.

Pests

No pests are of major concern.

Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.