Acoelorrhaphe wrightii
Paurotis Palm

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INTRODUCTION

This striking fan palm has several to many showy, upright, slender trunks which form attractive tight clumps with multiple suckers clustered at the base (Fig. 1). This ensures that there are trunks of different heights on the palm at all times if suckers are not pruned off. Remove the suckers to prevent formation of additional trunks. The two to three-foot-wide fronds are green above and silvery below borne on orange-green, armed petioles. Black, 0.25-inch fruit are borne on bright orange stalks which can be quite showy in the fall. Eventually reaching a height of 25 feet with a variable spread, the slow-growing Paurotis Palm is highly desirable in the landscape. Paurotis Palm is exceptionally attractive with nighttime lighting from below.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: Acoelorrhaphe wrightii
Pronunciation: ah-see-loe-RAY-fee RITE-ee-eye
Common name(s): Paurotis Palm
Family: Arecaceae
USDA hardiness zones: 10 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; reclamation plant; specimen
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

DESCRIPTION

Height: 15 to 25 feet
Spread: 10 to 15 feet
Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Figure 1. Middle-aged Paurotis Palm.
Crown shape: palm; upright
Crown density: open
Growth rate: slow
Texture: fine

Foliage
Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
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: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower
Flower color: white; yellow
Flower characteristics: showy; spring flowering; winter flowering

Fruit
Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: < .5 inch
Fruit covering: fleshy
Fruit color: black
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; no significant litter problem; showy

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
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; extended flooding; well-drained
Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern. Paurotis Palm is susceptible to chlorosis from micronutrient deficiencies (especially Mn) when grown in soil with a high pH. It also shows potassium deficiencies.

Drought tolerance: moderate
Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate
Soil 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
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: not known to be susceptible
Pest resistance: no pests are normally seen on the tree

USE AND MANAGEMENT

A native of the Florida Everglades, Paurotis Palm is hardy to about 25 to 28-degrees F. and prefers rich, moist locations. Growing in full sun or partial shade, growth is considerably slower in drier soils and could decline and die without irrigation on a dry, well-drained site. Paurotis Palm is tolerant of salt spray. It is popular as an accent or specimen for large residential, commercial or municipal landscapes where this beautiful palm can be seen in an open setting. Unfortunately, it grows slowly and is hard to come by in the trade. Set it in a bed of plumbago or other sprawling shrub or groundcover to create a striking accent.

Propagation is by seed.