



## *Phoenix reclinata* Senegal Date Palm<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

This striking palm creates an interesting silhouette with its multiple, gracefully curved, often reclining, slender brown trunks, and dense crowns of stiff but feathery leaf fronds (Fig. 1). Old frond bases are medium brown and remain on the trunk forming a showy trunk which is attractive all year long. A mature specimen of Senegal Date Palm can reach 35 feet in height with a 12 to 20-foot-spread and creates a striking tree which casts a light shade. The palm is elegant when lit from below at night. It is best used as an accent for large landscapes and parks. The somewhat showy flower stalks, often lost within the thick foliage, are followed by one-inch-long, bright orange dates which are incredibly showy. These can be very attractive, particularly when viewed from a balcony above the tree.

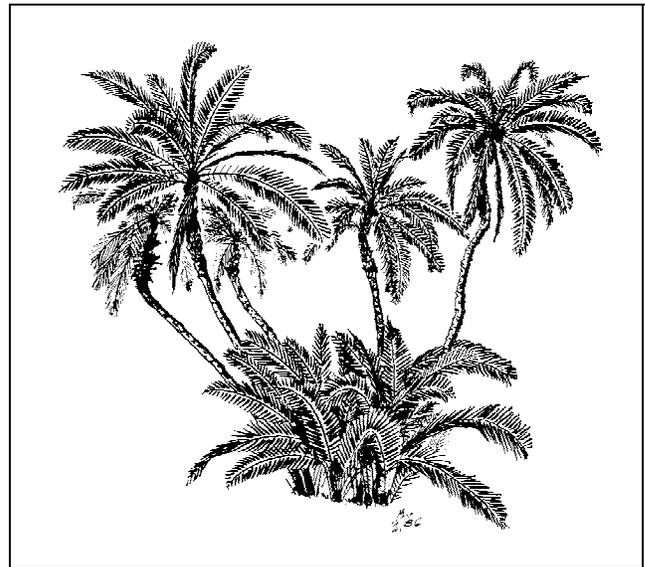


Figure 1. Middle-aged Senegal Date Palm.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Phoenix reclinata*  
**Pronunciation:** FEE-nicks reck-lih-NAY-tuh  
**Common name(s):** Senegal Date Palm  
**Family:** *Areaceae*  
**USDA hardiness zones:** 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)  
**Origin:** not native to North America  
**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; specimen; no proven urban tolerance  
**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

### DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 25 to 35 feet  
**Spread:** 12 to 20 feet  
**Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette  
**Crown shape:** palm; upright  
**Crown density:** open  
**Growth rate:** medium  
**Texture:** medium

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate; spiral  
**Leaf type:** odd pinnately compound  
**Leaflet margin:** entire  
**Leaflet shape:** linear

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-440, 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.

**Leaflet venation:** parallel

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaflet blade length:** 12 to 18 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristics:** showy; spring flowering; summer flowering

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** orange

**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:** requires pruning to develop 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; alkaline; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

**Soil salt tolerance:** poor

### 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:** very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect tree health or aesthetics

## USE AND MANAGEMENT

The multiple trunks lose older fronds as the palm grows, clearing lower trunks of all foliage. This characteristic makes Senegal Date Palm a wonderful tree for accenting in a bed of groundcover or a grouping of low shrubs. Trunks which bend to the horizontal as the palm ages may need to be supported with a brace or cable to hold them up.

Growing easily in full sun or partial shade, Senegal Date Palm will thrive on any well-drained soil. Plants should receive adequate moisture during periods of drought. This palm is too large for all but the largest residential landscapes. They are very costly to purchase due to the slow growth rate. Large specimens command a high price.

Propagation is by seed or division of the many suckers which appear at the base of old clumps.

## Pests

A variety of scales infest this palm.

## Diseases

Some diseases of this tree are lethal yellowing disease, leaf spot.

Stressed and damaged trees often are infected with the Ganoderma fungus. A conk is formed at the base of the tree which appears as a varnished shelf or mushroom. Remove the conk and the tree to help control the spread of the disease to other plants. Prevent injury to the trunk and roots, and plant in well-drained soil. Be sure sprinklers do not irrigate the trunk so it remains wet. A wet trunk and wet soil encourage this disease. There is no control for butt rot, only prevention.