



## ***Ptychosperma macarthurii*** **Macarthur Palm<sup>1</sup>**

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

### **INTRODUCTION**

This attractive small palm is noted for its multiple, slim, ringed grey trunks which are topped with soft green, feathery, flat, broad leaves with tips that appear jagged and torn (Fig. 1). Although able to reach 30 feet in height, Macarthur Palm is most often seen 10 to 15 feet in height with a variable spread. The two-foot-long, branched flower stalks hang below the crownshaft throughout the year and contain small, white blooms. These blooms give way to bright red, showy sprays of half-inch-long fruits which ripen year-round.

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Scientific name:** *Ptychosperma macarthurii*

**Pronunciation:** tye-koe-SPER-muh  
mack-ar-THUR-ee-eye

**Common name(s):** Macarthur Palm

**Family:** Arecaceae

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

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; suitable for growing indoors; near a deck or patio; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

### **DESCRIPTION**

**Height:** 15 to 25 feet

**Spread:** 6 to 10 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette

**Crown shape:** palm; upright

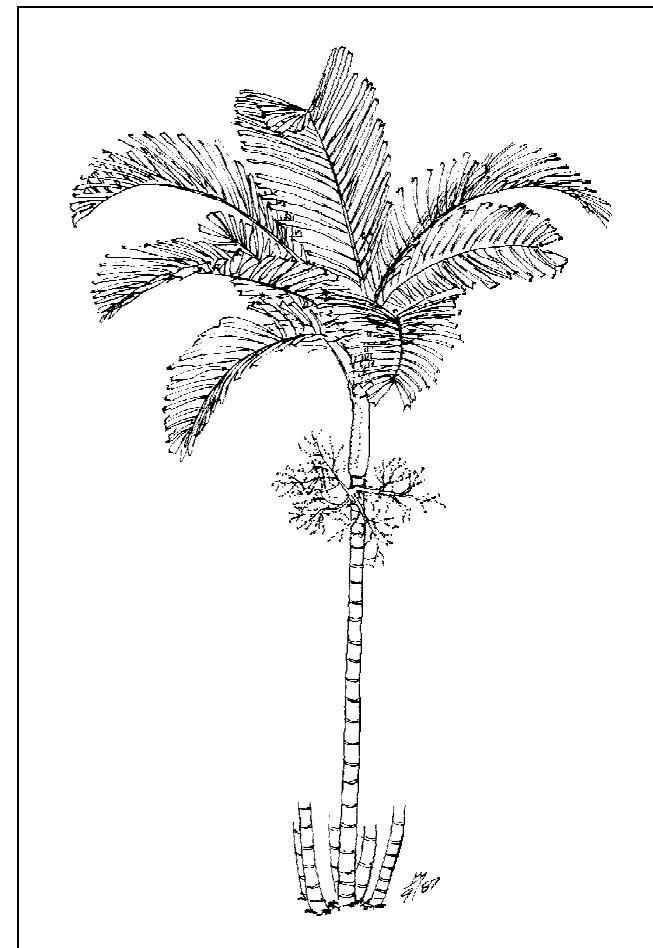


Figure 1. Middle-aged Macarthur Palm.

**Crown density:** open

**Growth rate:** medium

**Texture:** medium

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-535, 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:** spiral (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** odd pinnately compound

**Leaflet margin:** entire; incised

**Leaflet shape:** linear; oblong; obovate

**Leaflet venation:** parallel

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaflet blade length:** 8 to 12 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristics:** fall flowering; pleasant fragrance; inconspicuous and not showy; summer flowering

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** oval; round

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

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** red

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

## Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in the shade; tree grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** low

**Soil salt tolerance:** poor

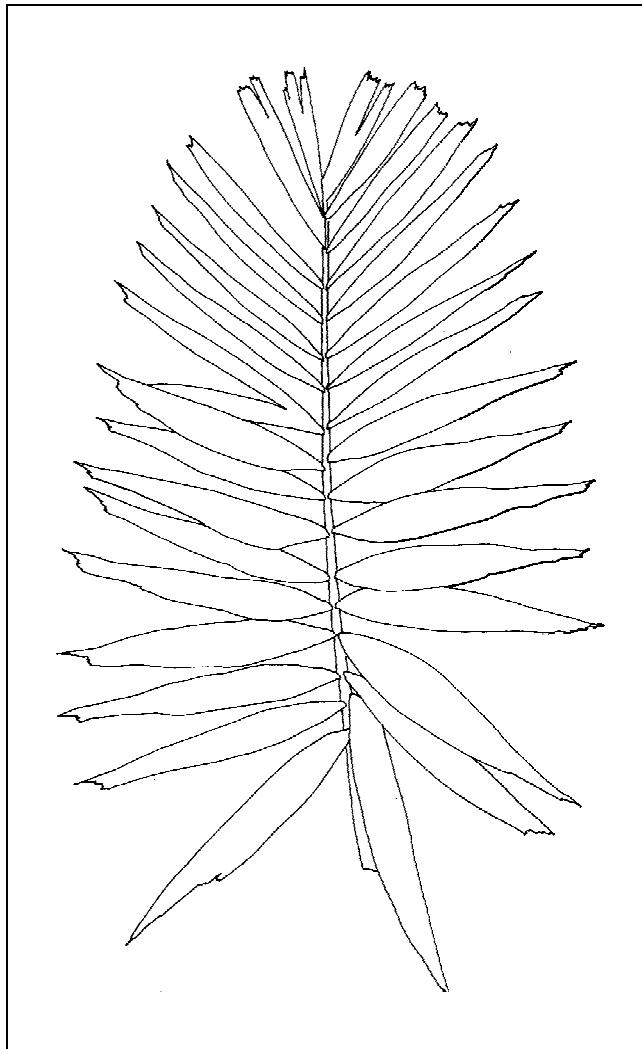


Figure 3. Foliage of Macarthur Palm.

## 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:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

## USE AND MANAGEMENT

Macarthur Palm is often used in planters or urns but quickly outgrows these containers. It makes a striking lighted nighttime specimen, and is ideal for accenting shaded, sheltered locations, such as entranceways and patios. It is often planted in groups with individual trees several feet apart.

Macarthur Palm prefers partial shade but will tolerate full sun or dense shade on any well-drained soil. Abundant moisture will allow it to look its best because it will keep more leaves.

Propagation is by seed.

## Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern. This palm is lethal yellowing-resistant. Sooty mold sometimes coats the trunk.