



# *Veitchia merrillii* Christmas Palm<sup>1</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

This stocky, single-trunked palm with stiffly arched, six-foot-long, bright green fronds is noted for the fall and winter appearance of the very showy clusters of glossy, bright red fruits which hang below the leaves at the base of the crown shaft (Fig. 1). Reaching 25 feet in height, though often much smaller, Christmas Palm has a very neat appearance and is well-suited to use as a patio, terrace, specimen, or framing tree. Unfortunately, the palm is very susceptible to lethal yellowing disease and probably should not be planted. Fortunately, there are other *Veitchia* resistant to the disease, including *Veitchia macdanielsi* and *Veitchia montgomeryana*, but these are much taller palms with thicker trunks.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Veitchia merrillii*

**Pronunciation:** VEE-chee-uh mer-RILL-ee-eye

**Common name(s):** Christmas Palm, Manila 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; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance

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

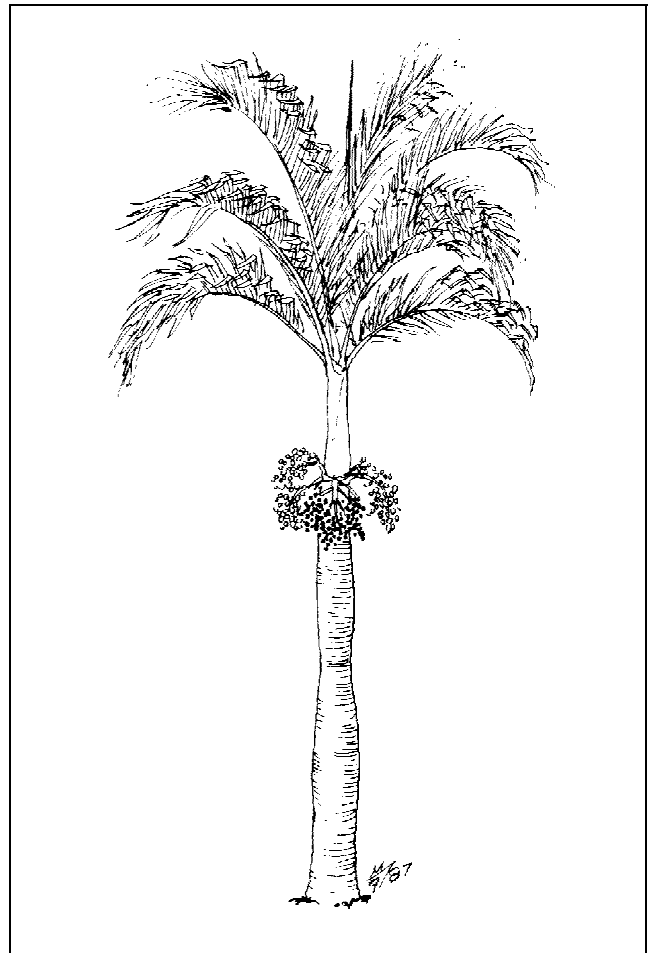


Figure 1. Middle-aged Christmas Palm.

## DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 20 to 30 feet

**Spread:** 10 to 15 feet

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-658, 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.

**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:** medium

**Texture:** medium

**Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate; spiral

**Leaf type:** odd pinnately compound

**Leaflet margin:** entire

**Leaflet shape:** lanceolate

**Leaflet venation:** parallel

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaflet blade length:** 12 to 18 inches; 8 to 12 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

**Flower color:** white; yellow

**Flower characteristics:** inconspicuous and not showy; summer flowering

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** oval

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

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** red

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; persistent on the tree; showy

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; should be grown with a single leader; 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 full sun

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

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

## Other

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** tree has winter interest due to  
unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter  
trunk, or winter flowers

**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding

**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

Christmas Palm should receive some shade while young but will grow in full sun when older on a wide variety of well-drained soils, including limestone soils. Trees should only be used in frost-free areas. Consider substituting one of the *Veitchia* mentioned above, the Carpentaria Palm, *Ptychosperma macarthurii*, or a variety of other palms resistant to lethal yellowing disease.

Propagation is by seed.

## Pests

Scales can infest and spoil young palms.

## Diseases

It is very susceptible to lethal yellowing disease.