

# Palms in Paradise

WRITTEN BY BETSY A. ENO  
VENICE GULF COAST LIVING MAGAZINE



Admired for their majestic stature, elegant form, and undeniable beauty, palm trees, when displayed against the backdrop of a vibrant blue sky, radiant sunshine, and billowy white clouds, give you the sense that you have definitely arrived in paradise!

Throughout history, palm trees have been recognized as symbols of victory. In ancient times, branches (also called fronds) were awarded to champions at public games and worn by Roman soldiers as they paraded the streets of Rome. Palm fronds also signified the people's approval when lifted to honor conquering heroes, carried in triumphal processions, or laid down in homage to kings. In religious cultures, these iconic trees, which are mentioned both in the Quran and in the Bible, are considered to represent peace, fertility, and eternal life.

Today, palm trees are utilized for their resources, regarded for their resilience and displayed for their splendor throughout residential, commercial, and city landscapes. These distinctive, extremely popular plants require very little maintenance, adapt to all types of soils, survive in most climates, and are able to withstand severe storms.

Although it may be easy to recognize the variations of these ornate plants, you might be surprised to learn that there are thousands of palm tree species throughout the world. Even so, they can be divided into two identifiable groups: those that have palmate, or fan-shaped, leaves and those adorned with pinnate, or feather-shaped, ones. Palmate leaves appear in a bunch at the end of a stem, like an open hand on an arm, while pinnate leaves form along both sides of a stem resembling that of a feather. Palm trees can also be categorized by two methods of growth: solitary, a single stalk topped with leaves, and clustered, a grouping of leaves that rise from the ground without ever forming a trunk or that can grow on multiple stems.

## Exploring Exotic Evergreens

We invite you to meander down the path of palms with us and discover how to easily identify these botanical beauties.

### Coconut Palm

Scientifically named *Cocos nucifera*, the Coconut Palm (opposite page), is perhaps the most well known tree among all palms. Captured both in print and on film, this picturesque tree can often be seen hugging the shoreline, while bending its flexible trunk in a captivating fashion. Lovers of abundant sunshine and humid climates, Coconut Palms are extremely salt-tolerant and thrive in areas along the coast. Soaring to heights of up to 80 feet, their slender gray trunks are topped with yellow-green pinnate leaves, each spanning 15 to 17 feet long. The *Cocos nucifera* is easy to detect as clusters of coconuts, which can be observed year-round, hang just below the tree's canopy. While the Coconut Palm may be thought of as the "beach babe" of trees, these iconic gems are often planted farther inland, adding an extra dash of coastal charm wherever they are found.

### Canary Island Date Palm

Originally cultivated in the Canary Islands located off the coast of northeast Africa, the Canary Island Date Palm (*Phoenix canariensis*) may not be native to our country, but that doesn't prevent it from gracing the landscapes of our city. This stunning spectacle exhibits a lovely diamond-shaped pattern and when mature, it has an impressive crown of over 50 arching pinnate leaves that gives the glorious appearance of dispersing fireworks. It is not uncommon to see ferns peeking out from old leaf stems just below the canopy, creating a unique hanging garden attraction. The largest of the Date Palm family, the trunk of the *Phoenix canariensis* can grow up to 60 feet tall and sometimes as large as 3 feet thick! When in bloom, bright orange fruit, shaped like olives are observed drooping from highly branched flowering clusters. These grand ornamental trees are a spectacular sight especially when lined along popular streets.

*Continues on next page*

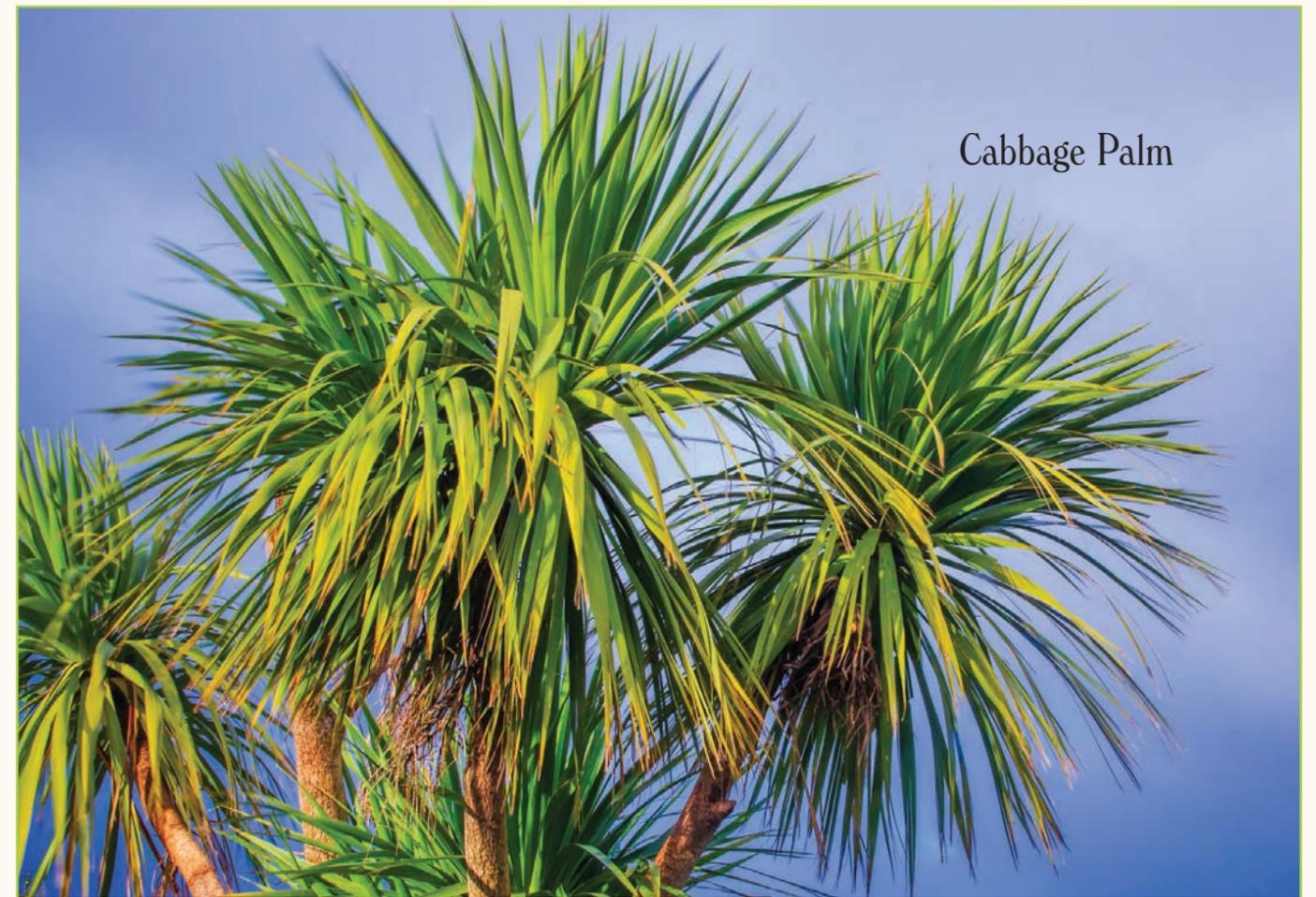


## Foxtail Palm

Native to northeastern Australia, it only takes one look at the Foxtail Palm (*Wodyetia bifurcata*) to understand how this attractive tree got its name. Positioned atop a slender close-ringed trunk, the *Wodyetia bifurcata*'s unique arching fronds contain leaflets that radiate from the leaf stem at all angles, giving the appearance of a fox's bushy tail. When developed, this pretty palm can shoot up to 30 feet tall, showing off its canopy of 8 to 10 leaves of fluffy foliage that spreads across 15 to 20 feet. During season, white blossoms can be viewed at the base of the Foxtail's crown, producing vibrant clusters of orange-red fruit, each filled with a single seed. Unknown to botanists until 1983, the *Wodyetia bifurcata* was first introduced to the American horticultural trade in 1995 according to the Florida Plant Encyclopedia. Although it is now listed as a threatened species in Australia, the Foxtail Palm is becoming increasingly popular in our country, making itself known in California, southern Florida, and Texas where it is used as a decorative landscape feature.



## Cabbage Palm



Research indicates that Florida leads the nation in carrying the largest variety of native palm trees and the most palm genera than any other state. At the top of the list, Florida's state tree, the Cabbage Palm (*Sabal palmetto*) is the most common species of its kind. Featuring palmate leaves, Cabbage Palms are hardy plants that thrive best in moist fertile soil but are also extremely adaptable. Able to reach a staggering height of 80 feet, the *Sabal palmetto* has a dense rounded crown that provides a great nesting haven and an excellent hide-out for small animals. In early summer, Cabbage Palms produce fragrant white flowers followed by small black fruit that ripens in the fall, and is enjoyed by many songbirds, squirrels, and other wildlife. The trunk of our state tree can be identified by its unique crisscross leaf base known as "boots," located just below the crown. On some trees, this pattern covers the entire stalk, while others shed their boots, before revealing a rough fibrous brown trunk which eventually turns gray and becomes smooth with age.

*Continues on next page*

**Fine PROPERTIES**  
*"My Goal is to Exceed Your Expectations"*  
 Residential Listings,  
 New Construction & Sales  
**SHELLEY ROSE JENNINGS**  
 Realtor®, PSA, ABR®, RSPS®  
 47 years of sales & marketing  
 Serving areas from Sarasota to Punta Gorda  
 Specializing in West Villages & Wellen Park  
 1505 S. Tamiami Trail, Venice, FL 34285 • 941.451.9286  
 ShelleySellsSarasota@gmail.com • ShelleyRoseJenningsRealtor.com




**I ♥ Habitat for Humanity**  
**ReStore**  
 941.493.0529  
 Thank you Venice and the Herald Tribune for voting The Habitat ReStore Winner for Best Used Furniture Store!  
**Great Stuff - Great Prices - Great Cause**  
 The ReStore helps Habitat for Humanity South Sarasota County build strength, stability and self-reliance through shelter in your community and around the world.  
 1400 Ogden Rd., Venice, FL 34285 • HabitatSouthSarasota.org




Large variety of BAGELS, muffins & more!  
**CAFE Bagel**  
 BAKED FRESH DAILY  
 DINE IN, TAKE-OUT  
 OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK!  
 941.493.2095  
 CafeBagelOnline.com  
 Sun. - Sat: 6:30 am - 2 pm  
 1811 Tamiami Tr. S., Venice




**Let Me Help You Find Your Spot in Paradise!**  
 More than 40 Years of Business Experience  
 Specializing in the Sarasota, Venice, North Port, Englewood & West Villages areas  
**RE/MAX AllianceGroup**  
**DEBI HARMAN**  
 MBA, Realtor®  
 @DebiHarman1075 • Debi.Harman@gmail.com 941.666.0002






NATURE

### Cuban Royal Palm

Showcasing a lovely ringed, light gray columnar trunk with a smooth glossy crownshaft and a gorgeous crest of bright green pinnate leaves, the Cuban Royal Palm (*Roystonea regia*) is truly a sight to behold! Imported into Florida in large quantities during the 1920s and 1930s, this stately tree is able to reach heights in excess of 50 feet. When fully developed, its crown contains 15 to 20 fronds with 8-inch leaflets arranged in rows each 10 feet long, presenting a canopy spread of up to 25 feet. Often mistaken for the nearly identical Florida Royal Palm (*Roystonea elata*), the Cuban Royal has one distinguishable difference: a curvaceous figure that expands at the base, constricts halfway up and bulges at the center, giving it a shapely contour. Both species of trees produce 3' to 4' inflorescence at the base of their crownshaft which breeds male and female flowers. Whether standing alone, lined up together, or arranged in groups, one thing is certain: the Royal Palm is a regal beauty that makes a lovely focal point in any landscape setting.



Photo by Betsy A Eno

### Areca Palm

Widely used as a hedge or privacy screen, the Areca Palm (*Dypsis lutescens*), which is native to Madagascar features multiple slender stalks that spring forth from its base. Able to climb up to 20 feet high, each petiole on this clustering palm holds 6 to 8 leaves hosting 80 to 100 leaflets that gracefully arch outward and downward. When looking at this plant from a distance, its leaves resemble the wings of a butterfly, thus inspiring one of its common names, the Butterfly Palm. The *Dypsis lutescens* is also referred to as the Golden Cane Palm, due to the golden-yellow hue that becomes evident in the tree's leaves and stems when placed in the sun. However, this color does not emerge when it is planted in the shade and for that reason, it is commonly mistaken for the similar Cabada Palm (*Dypsis cabadae*). The difference can be seen in the plant's height, as the Cabada Palm will grow at least 10 feet taller than the Areca Palm. Throughout Venice and Nokomis, these trees can be seen just about everywhere since they are commonly used in residential landscaping.

Take a closer look at these and other trees as you stroll through West Blalock Park on Venice Island. There you will find dozens of palms and a plaque posted near each tree, indicating its scientific and common name, origin, growth habits, tolerances, and more. You might even want to take your camera along to capture some photos of these tropical treasures and put them on display or create your own photographic journal to share with family and friends.

**Garcia**  
LAWN & LANDSCAPING

Licensed and insured with over 20 years of experience

Juan Garcia, Owner/Landscape Manager • 941.408.4702

Jesus Garcia, Maintenance Manager • 941.525.3020

Free Quotes! Call or Text • GarciaLawn123@Gmail.com

Maintenance | Full Landscaping | Trees | Mulching



*The Magazine for People Who Live, Work & Play in Paradise*

INDEPENDENTLY OWNED & OPERATED LOCALLY SINCE 1998

Each issue of Venice Gulf Coast Living Magazine showcases outstanding businesses, interesting people and stunning images that reflect the beauty of our community.

We are privileged to be a part of the continued growth and success of the Venice area... our little piece of paradise, right by the Gulf!

**941.488.5083** For advertising and all your print design needs.