**Bismarckia nobilis**  
Bismarck Palm¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

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**INTRODUCTION**

Lending a tropical flair to the landscape, Bismarck Palm slowly reaches 25 to 50 feet or more in height and is topped with gorgeous, four-foot-long and wide, stiff, waxy, blue/gray leaves (Fig. 1). These palms cannot be missed in the landscape due to the very striking frond color and texture. The flower stalks are four feet long and produce many 1.5-inch-long fruits.

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**GENERAL INFORMATION**

Scientific name: *Bismarckia nobilis*  
Pronunciation: biz-MAR-kee-uh no-BILL-iss  
Common name(s): Bismarck Palm  
Family: Arecaceae  
USDA hardiness zones: 10 through 11 (Fig. 2)  
Origin: not native to North America  
Uses: suitable for growing indoors; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; specimen  
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

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**DESCRIPTION**

Height: 40 to 70 feet  
Spread: 10 to 15 feet  
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: slow  
Texture: coarse

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1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-101, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.

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Flower

**Flower color:** white  
**Flower characteristics:** inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round  
**Fruit length:** 1 to 3 inches  
**Fruit covering:** fleshy  
**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

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:** no

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:** high  
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

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:** no pests are normally seen on the tree

**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

Several of these palms placed together in a commercial or large residential setting can contrast dramatically with existing vegetation, providing a
wonderful relief from the greens so common in most landscapes. Single specimens are also attractive and well suited for most residential-sized landscapes. A row of Bismarck Palms spaced 15 feet apart along each side of an entry road or wide walkway can create a dramatic impact. Even if you do not collect palms, this one should be considered when planning a landscape in USDA hardiness zones 10 and 11.

Bismarck Palm should be grown in full sun or partial shade on well-drained soil. This palm is highly drought- and salt-tolerant and is becoming more popular. As is the case with a number of palms, it cannot be transplanted until a trunk develops and is visible at the base of the plant.

Propagation is by seed.

**Pests and Diseases**

There are no major pest problems on this palm. Watch for scale infestations.