**Butia capitata**  
Pindo Palm

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

**INTRODUCTION**

This cold-hardy, single-trunked palm is easily recognized by its rounded canopy of blue-grey, strongly-recurved, graceful fronds which curve in toward the trunk (Fig. 1). The heavy, stocky trunks are covered with persistent leaf bases. Large, showy clusters of orange-yellow, juicy, edible fruits, the size of large dates, are produced and often used to make jams or jellies. The fruit, ripening in summer, can be messy on sidewalks or patios, so you may want to plant 10 feet away from the walk or patio. This slow-growing palm eventually will reach 20 feet tall and is attractive as a freestanding specimen or grouped with other palms. Most are seen smaller than this since growth rate is very slow. Plant 10 feet apart as a street tree and they can be planted beneath power lines due to slow growth and small size.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Scientific name:** Butia capitata  
**Pronunciation:** BEW-tee-uh kap ih TAY tuh  
**Common name(s):** Pindo Palm, Jelly Palm  
**Family:** Arecaceae  
**USDA hardiness zones:** 8B through 11 (Fig. 2)  
**Origin:** not native to North America  
**Uses:** large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen;  

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

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**DESCRIPTION**

**Height:** 15 to 25 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  

**Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** spiral (Fig. 3)  
**Leaf type:** odd pinnately compound  
**Leaflet margin:** entire  
**Leaflet shape:** linear  
**Leaflet venation:** parallel  
**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen  
**Leaflet blade length:** 18 to 36 inches  
**Leaf color:** blue or blue-green; silver  
**Fall color:** no fall color change  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy  

**Flower**

**Flower color:** white  
**Flower characteristics:** showy; spring flowering  

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** round  
**Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch  
**Fruit covering:** fleshy  
**Fruit color:** orange; yellow  
**Fruit characteristics:** attracts squirrels and other mammals; suited for human consumption; 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; not particularly showy; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns  
**Pruning requirement:** needs little pruning to develop a strong structure  
**Breakage:** resistant  
**Crown shaft:** no  

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*Figure 2.* Shaded area represents potential planting range.
Propagation is by seed which take many months for germination.

**Pests**

Palm leaf skeletonizer, scale, and micronutrient deficiencies (especially Mn and Fe) are occasional problems for pindo palm. Micronutrient deficiencies only show up on soil with a high pH.

**Diseases**

No diseases are of major concern. The roots and lower trunk can rot if soil is kept too moist.

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**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:** high

**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

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**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

Growing in full sun or part shade on a wide variety of soils, including alkaline, pindo palm is moderately salt-tolerant. Pindo palm can survive hot, windy conditions, asphalt and concrete areas but looks better in good soil with adequate moisture. Some people do not consider this a pretty palm but it certainly will grow anywhere.

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Figure 3. Foliage of Pindo Palm.