Howea forsteriana
Sentry Palm

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INTRODUCTION

Capable of reaching a height of 40 feet but often seen much shorter, this slow-growing palm has a slim, six-inch-diameter, showy, green trunk (Fig. 1). The trunk resembles bamboo. The graceful, dark green fronds have a smooth, neat appearance, unencumbered by spines or rough bark. Often used as an urn or interior plant, Sentry Palm serves well as a small framing or specimen tree in a shady location.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: Howea forsteriana
Pronunciation: HOW-ee-uh for-stair-ee-AY-nuh
Common name(s): Sentry Palm, Kentia Palm
Family: Arecaceae
USDA hardiness zones: 9B 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
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

DESCRIPTION

Height: 15 to 25 feet
Spread: 6 to 10 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

Figure 1. Middle-aged Sentry Palm.
**Foliage**

- **Leaf arrangement:** spiral (Fig. 3)
- **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
- **Leaf color:** green
- **Fall color:** no fall color change
- **Fall characteristic:** not showy

**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 the shade
- **Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained
- **Drought tolerance:** moderate
- **Aerosol salt tolerance:** none

**Flower**

- **Flower color:** white
- **Flower characteristics:** inconspicuous and not showy

**Fruit**

- **Fruit shape:** oval; round
- **Fruit length:** 1 to 3 inches
- **Fruit covering:** fleshy
- **Fruit color:** red; yellow

*Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.*
Figure 3. Foliage of Sentry 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: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect tree health or aesthetics

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Sentry Palm requires partial to deep shade when young, and fertile, well-drained soils. It is not salt-tolerant. It should be protected from frost, winds, and keep lawn grasses away from the root system. It makes a nice house plant if it is not overwatered.

Propagation is by seed.

Pests

Scale.

Diseases

Lethal yellowing disease.