**Phoenix canariensis**  
Canary Island Date Palm

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

INTRODUCTION

This large, stately palm often reaches a size too massive for most residential landscapes but, fortunately, it is very slow-growing and will take a considerable amount of time to reach its 50 to 60-foot-height (Fig. 1). Canary Island Date Palm is most impressive with its single, upright, thick trunk topped with a crown of 8 to 15-foot-long, stiff leaves with extremely sharp spines at their bases. The stalks of inconspicuous flowers are replaced with clusters of one-inch-diameter, orange-yellow, date-like, ornamental fruits which ripen in early summer. The trunk can reach a diameter of four feet and is covered with an attractive, diamond-shaped pattern from old leaf scars.

GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** Phoenix canariensis  
**Pronunciation:** FEE-nicks kan-air-ee-EN-sis  
**Common name(s):** Canary Island Date Palm  
**Family:** Arecaceae  
**USDA hardiness zones:** 9 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; specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; tree has been successfully grown in urban areas where air pollution, poor drainage, compacted soil, and/or drought are common

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

---

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-439, 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.
DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 40 to 60 feet  
**Spread:** 20 to 25 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  
**Leaf type:** odd pinnately compound  
**Leaflet margin:** entire  
**Leaflet shape:** linear  
**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

**Flower**

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

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** oval; round  
**Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch  
**Fruit covering:** fleshy  
**Fruit color:** orange; yellow  
**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; suited for human consumption; no significant litter problem; 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:** no
Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in full sun  
**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline; 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:** very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect tree health or aesthetics

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Canary Island Date Palm should be grown in full sun on fertile, moist soil for best growth but is tolerant of any well-drained soil. It can be planted on the inland side of coastal condominiums and large homes due to moderately high salt-tolerance. It does well as a street or avenue tree, even in confined soil spaces. Canary Island Date Palm will require pruning to remove old fronds. Older leaves frequently become chlorotic from magnesium or potassium-deficiency. Preventive applications of appropriate fertilizer helps avoid this. Avoid damage to the trunk by locating it properly in the landscape and keeping landscape maintenance equipment away. Damaged trees are susceptible to Ganoderma rot.

Only prune fronds which hang below the horizontal. Do not remove those growing upright since this may slow the growth and reduce vigor.

Propagation is by seed.

Pests

Giant palm weevil can kill recently transplanted palms or those which are injured. Once in the palm, remedial control is not possible. Preventing injury is the best way to avoid the weevil. Some landscape managers conduct a preventive spray program following transplanting on these highly valued palms until they are well-established in the landscape.

Palm leaf skeletonizer devours leaves.

A variety of scale insects infest this palm.

Diseases

Mildly susceptible to lethal yellowing disease and leaf spot.

Stressed and damaged trees often are infected with the Ganoderma fungus. A conk is formed at the base of the tree which appears as a varnished shelf or mushroom. Remove the conk and the tree to help control the spread of the disease to other plants. Prevent injury to the trunk and roots, and plant in well-drained soil. Be sure sprinklers do not irrigate the trunk so it remains wet. A wet trunk and wet soil encourage this disease. There is no control for butt rot, only prevention.