Phoenix roebelenii
Pygmy Date Palm

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INTRODUCTION

One of the finest of the dwarf palms, Pygmy Date Palm slowly reaches 6 to 12 feet in height and has an upright or curving, single trunk topped with a dense, full crown of gracefully arching, three-foot-long leaves (Fig. 1). The insignificant flower clusters, hidden by the foliage, are present periodically throughout the year and produce small, jet-black dates which ripen to a deep red. Pygmy Date Palm is quite popular as a specimen planting or in containers, especially attractive at poolside. It is usually used as a single specimen although it is also effective in groups of three or more.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: Phoenix roebelenii
Pronunciation: FEE-nicks roe-beh-LEN-nee-eye
Common name(s): Pygmy Date Palm
Family: Arecaceae
USDA hardiness zones: 10 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; no proven urban tolerance
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

DESCRIPTION

Height: 6 to 12 feet
Spread: 6 to 10 feet
Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette
Crown shape: palm; upright
Crown density: open

Figure 1. Middle-aged Pygmy Date Palm.
Phoenix roebelenii -- Pygmy Date Palm

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate; 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: 8 to 12 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 full sun
Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained
Drought tolerance: moderate
Aerosol salt tolerance: low
Soil salt tolerance: poor

Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.
**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

Pygmy Date Palm should only be grown in frost-free areas in sun or shade on well-drained soils. Plants should be regularly watered. Magnesium or potassium deficiency symptoms (chlorotic and spotted older fronds) often develop on the older leaves when grown in soils with a pH above 7. It has some salt tolerance, surviving on the inland side of coastal condominiums.

Propagation is by seed.

**Pests**

Palm leaf skeletonizer and a large number of scales can infest this palm.

**Diseases**

Leaf spot and bud rot are two diseases which can infect this 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:** long-term health usually not affected by pests