



# *Chrysalidocarpus lutescens* Yellow Butterfly Palm<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

This graceful, clump-growing palm reaches 20 to 30 feet in height with a spread of 8 to 10 feet (Fig. 1). The gently arching, four to six-inch-wide, ringed, bamboo-like, green, multiple trunks are topped with curved, feathery, yellow-green fronds. Known under a variety of names, this beautiful soft palm is quite valued throughout the tropics and is widely planted in frostfree areas. The small, white, inconspicuous flowers are produced all year long on three-foot stalks among the leaves, and the small, oblong, black fruits ripen all year. Yellow Butterfly Palm makes an attractive specimen, screening, or poolside planting but it is overused.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Chrysalidocarpus lutescens*

**Pronunciation:** kriss-al-lid-oh-KAR-pus  
loo-TESS-enz

**Common name(s):** Yellow Butterfly Palm, Bamboo Palm, Areca Palm

**Family:** *Areaceae*

**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; screen; specimen

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



Figure 1. Mature Yellow Butterfly Palm.

## DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 20 to 30 feet

**Spread:** 8 to 10 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette

**Crown shape:** palm; upright; vase shape

**Crown density:** open

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** fine

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-165, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.
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.



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

### 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:** 18 to 36 inches; 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

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** oval; round

**Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** black; brown; red

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Crown shaft:** yes

### Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in the shade; tree grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; occasionally wet; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

## **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

## **USE AND MANAGEMENT**

Growing in full sun where it makes an excellent specimen or screen (on four-foot-centers) to the rather dense shade of patios, porches or as house plants, Yellow Butterfly Palm prefers fertile, well-drained, acid soil. Small palms benefit from some shade until they are several feet tall and palms should be watered during periods of drought. They require regular fertilizer applications to maintain a good appearance. Young palms in full sun and those in high pH soils develop yellow leaves. Older leaves on plants of any age become chlorotic, frequently from a deficiency of potassium. Affected leaves are often speckled with bronze or yellow. Yellow Butterfly Palm is moderately salt-tolerant.

Propagation is by seeds or division.

## **Pests**

Scales followed by sooty-mold can be a problem for Yellow Butterfly Palm.

## **Diseases**

Ganoderma root rot, potassium deficiency on older leaves.