

Chrysalidocarpus lutescens Yellow Butterfly Palm¹

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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

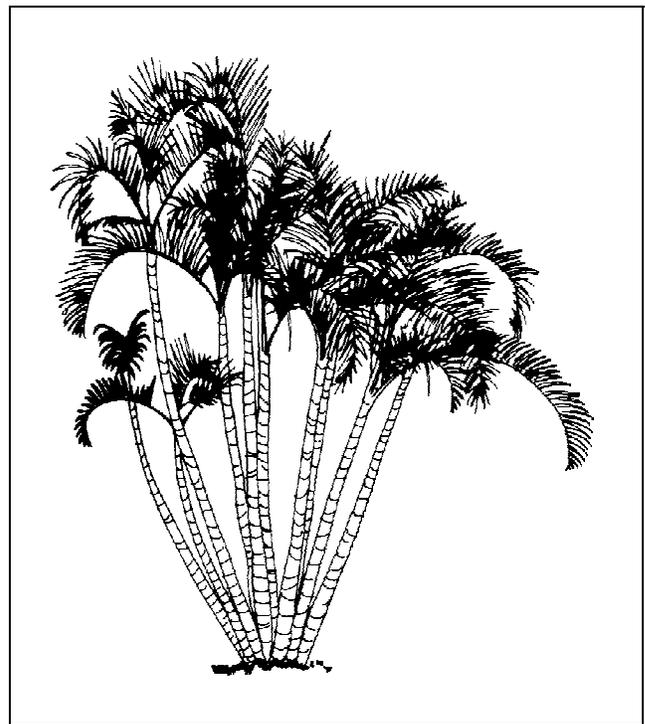


Figure 1. Mature Yellow Butterfly Palm.

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

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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.