

UC Santa Barbara

Educational Materials

Title

Palms: Campus Flora Walking Tour, University of California, Santa Barbara

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PALM WALK



The University of California, Santa Barbara is an institution that prides itself on diversity. This commitment extends to the ornamental horticulture found throughout the campus. UCSB is home to several interesting palm species. This tour provides an opportunity to see eleven palms that provide a distinct landscape on the UCSB campus.

1. **DATE** • *Phoenix dactylifera*. This grey-colored palm is native to North Africa and Western Asia, and has been cultivated for over 8,000 years for its edible fruit. *Dactylifera* means “bearing fingers” which refers to the appearance of the date fruits upon the flower stalks. The plants will rarely bear fruit in Santa Barbara since they require higher temperatures.

2. **JELLY** • *Butia capitata*. This palm has grey, downward flexed foliage arising from a stubble of old leaf bases. The flower stalks of this Brazilian native are initially protected in a large, woody, boat shaped bract that is often employed as a vessel by flower arrangers. The cream to maroon flowers give rise to sweet tasting, orange-yellow fruit, which may be used to make a tart jelly or wine.

3. **CHILEAN WINE** • *Jubea chilensis*. Charles Darwin described this palm as ugly when he saw it in Chile, but it is now widely grown for its massive structure. Grey foliage is borne atop a broadly-bottle-shaped trunk. Tassels of flowers emerge from a thick, protective sheath with an orange interior. The flowers develop into yellow fruits bearing edible kernels. In Chile the palm is prized for its sap, which is fermented to make wine, a practice that has drastically reduced wild populations of this elegant tree.

4. **MEXICAN FAN** • *Washingtonia robusta*. These closely related palms include our only native palm (*W. filifera*), and are difficult to distinguish on first glance. Both are large trees, reaching 80-100 feet. If left untrimmed, they are marked by a dangling skirt of old, grey leaves that create great habitat for birds, lizards and rats. *W. robusta* tends to have a thinner trunk, darker green leaves with a deep red splotch at the base of the stalk, and a more spherical crown of leaves, than does *W. filifera*.

5. **FISHTAIL** • *Caryota mitis*. The leaflets of this Southeast Asian palm are elongate triangles, much like fish tails. All species are “monocarpic,” meaning once they reach a certain size, they proceed to flower from the top to the bottom of the tree and then die. The fruits of *Caryota* possess oxalic acid, and are irritating to the skin and should not be eaten.

6. **KING** • *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*. Native to the rainforests of eastern Australia, the King Palm is listed as rare though not threatened with extinction. The leaf bases encircle the trunk, forming a green “crown shaft” below the leaves. Masses of purple flowers hang below the crown shaft and produce bright red seeds. Often clusters of flowers and fruits are present on the same trunk, creating a colorful sight.

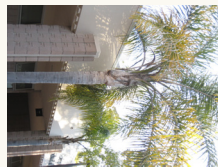
7. **EUROPEAN FAN** • *Chamerops humilis*. This species grows in the Mediterranean area, and is the only palm native to Europe. It can survive temperatures below 20 degrees Fahrenheit, is fairly fast growing, and is also drought resistant. It tends to sprout at the base, creating clumps of upwardly arching stems, covered with thick fibers. The leaf stalks have needle-like, forward-pointing spines. The clumps of yellow flowers are often obscured by the dense crown.

8. **QUEEN** • *Syagrus romanzoffiana*. These South American palms have elongate feathery foliage with drooping leaflets borne on a smooth grey trunk ringed with old leaf scars. Large clusters of creamy flowers are borne at the base of the crown and emerge from a 3 to 4-foot-long protective, boat-like bract that is elegantly ribbed. The flowers mature in summer to yield showy orange, edible fruits. In its native locations, the durable stems are used for pier pilings.

PALMS

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9. **WINDMILL** • *Trachycarpus fortunei*. This palm is native to China, and is the most cold-hardy of all cultivated palms. It has been known to survive in the snow even when completely defoliated. The stout and stiff leaves stand rigidly away from the thick fiber-covered trunk. The seeds are used medicinally and are believed to have cancer-fighting properties, while the trunk fibers may be used to line hanging baskets.

10. **PYGMY DATE** • *Phoenix roebelenii*. This slow growing palm from Southeast Asia can grow both indoors and outdoors due to its hardy nature and small stature. Clusters of creamy yellow flowers mature into red-brown to dark purple fruit. The lower leaflets at the base of the stem are modified needle-like spines and can be quite painful.

11. **PARADISE** • *Howia forsteriana*. This palm is native to Lord Howe Is., Australia. The leaves have an elegant droop which produces a graceful appearance. The stem base is swollen and has strongly marked leaf scars that look like rings. This palm is often found in interior landscapes, flourishing in hotel lobbies and ballrooms. The Sentry Palm (*H. belmoreana*) is a rare relative restricted to the sandy soils of the same island. One individual is located on the east side of Davidson Library on campus.



AN OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

Dr. Vernon Cheadle, Chancellor of UCSB from 1962 until 1977, recognized the special opportunity and favorable circumstances of this botanically rich and unique environment. He had a vision of developing the campus into an outdoor classroom, which would not only serve as an educational tool but would also create an environment of great beauty. Art, Biology, Environmental Studies, Geography, and Geology classes make use of the unique and beautiful plants in UCSB's landscape.

We hope you will enjoy this tour.

Visit our Campus Flora Project Interactive Map
<http://earth.geog.ucsb.edu/CampusFlora>



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