

***Veitchia merrillii*: Christmas Palm¹**

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Introduction

This stocky, single-trunked palm with stiffly arched, six-foot-long, bright green fronds is noted for the fall and winter appearance of the very showy clusters of glossy, bright red fruits which hang below the leaves at the base of the crown shaft. Reaching 25 feet in height, though often much smaller, Christmas Palm has a very neat appearance and is well-suited to use as a patio, terrace, specimen, or framing tree. Unfortunately, the palm is very susceptible to lethal yellowing disease and probably should not be planted. Fortunately, there are other *Veitchia* resistant to the disease, including *Veitchia macdanielsi* and *Veitchia montgomeryana*, but these are much taller palms with thicker trunks.

General Information

Scientific name: *Veitchia merrillii*

Pronunciation: VEE-chee-uh mer-RILL-ee-eye

Common name(s): Christmas Palm, Manila Palm

Family: *Areaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: indoors; street without sidewalk; deck or patio; specimen; container or planter; sidewalk cutout (tree pit)

Availability: not native to North America

Description

Height: 20 to 30 feet

Spread: 10 to 15 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: palm, upright/erect

Crown density: open

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

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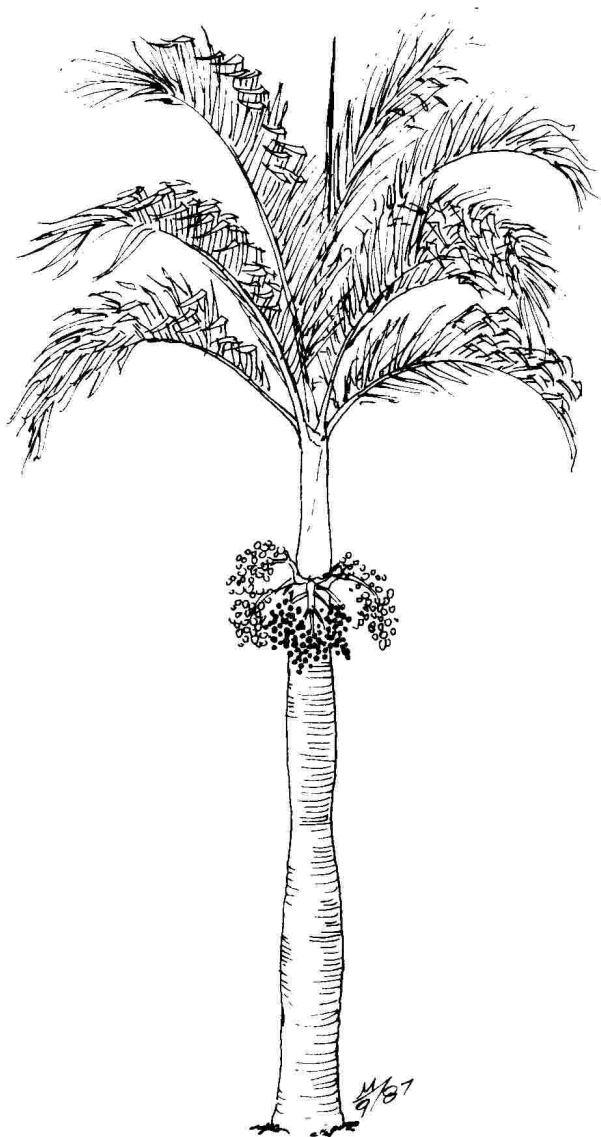


Figure 1. Middle-aged *Veitchia merrillii*: Christmas Palm

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: odd-pinnately compound

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: lanceolate

Leaf venation: parallel

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 8 to 12 inches, 12 to 18 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: yellow, white/cream/gray

Flower characteristics: not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: red

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches don't droop; showy; typically one trunk; thorns

Pruning requirement: little required

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: not applicable

Current year twig thickness:

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun, partial sun or partial shade

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

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: not a problem



Figure 2. Range

Winter interest: yes

Outstanding tree: no

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: resistant

Pest resistance: sensitive to pests/diseases

Propagation is by seed.

Pests

Scales can infest and spoil young palms.

Diseases

It is very susceptible to lethal yellowing disease.

Use and Management

Christmas Palm should receive some shade while young but will grow in full sun when older on a wide variety of well-drained soils, including limestone soils. Trees should only be used in frost-free areas. Consider substituting one of the Veitchia mentioned above, the Carpentaria Palm, *Ptychosperma macarthurii*, or a variety of other palms resistant to lethal yellowing disease.