Introduction

One of man's most useful plants. The heavy crown of long flowing fronds and gently curved trunks of Coconut Palm lend a tropical effect to any landscape setting in which they can grow. A beautiful street tree, Coconut Palm is also ideal as a background tree, framing tree, or as a striking freestanding specimen. Coconut Palms located along streets, walkways or near patios require pruning to remove the flowers or developing fruit so it doesn't fall and cause injury or property damage.

General Information

Scientific name: *Cocos nucifera*

Pronunciation: KOE-koase noo-SIFF-er-uh

Common name(s): 'Malayan Dwarf' Coconut Palm

Family: *Arecaceae*

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

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: sidewalk cutout (tree pit); reclamation; urban tolerant; fruit; specimen; street without sidewalk; tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; highway median

Availability: not native to North America

Description

Height: 30 to 60 feet

Spread: 15 to 25 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: palm, upright/erect

Crown density: open

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: coarse

---


2. Edward F. Gilman, 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.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A. & M. University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Larry Arrington, Dean
Cocos nucifera ‘Malayan Dwarf’: ‘Malayan Dwarf’ Coconut Palm

Figure 1. Middle-aged Cocos nucifera ‘Malayan Dwarf’: ‘Malayan Dwarf’ Coconut Palm

**Foliage**

Leaf arrangement: spiral (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: odd-pinnately compound
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: linear
Leaf venation: parallel
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 18 to 36 inches
Leaf color: green, yellow
Fall color: no color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

**Flower**

Flower color: white/cream/gray
Flower characteristics: not showy

**Fruit**

Fruit shape: oval, round
Fruit length: 6 to 12 inches
Fruit covering: dry or hard
Fruit color: green, yellow, brown
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves a litter problem

**Trunk and Branches**

Trunk/bark/branches: branches don’t droop; not 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
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; well-drained
Drought tolerance: high
Aerosol salt tolerance: high

**Other**

Roots: not a problem
Winter interest: no
Outstanding tree: no
Ozone sensitivity: unknown
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: resistant

Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

Use and Management

Due to the widespread devastation of lethal yellowing disease, use the resistant Malayan strains, often called dwarf or pygmy coconuts, and labelled yellow, golden, red, and green, according to the color of their fruits, such as 'Golden Malayan Dwarf'. The Malayan palms are very similar to the Jamaican Tall except for having straight trunks. The red strain is the most rugged of the three (more resistant to lethal yellowing) but has the least attractive foliage. Fronds have a distinct yellow cast to them and many people prefer the green frond types. Unfortunately, the green frond types are less resistant to lethal yellowing disease. The variety 'Maypan', a hybrid of Malayan x Panama Tall, has the most robust and rapid growth yet retains its resistance to lethal yellowing disease. It also grows well on poor sites. All Coconut Palms are highly salt-tolerant and make nice street trees if planted when they are tall enough. Be aware that falling fruit can damage vehicles or hit pedestrians and the flower stalks (in spring) or developing fruit (summer) may need to be removed.

Coconut Palms grow in full sun on any well-drained soils. Plants respond well to being fertilized. Malayan Dwarf selections require more fertilizer and may be more susceptible to palm aphids than Jamaican Tall coconut palms.

Propagation is by seed. The large coconuts, with outer husk, should be half-buried on their side in soil. Germination can take many months.

Pests

Nematodes may infest this palm.
Diseases

Lethal yellowing disease, virus diseases, and fungi all affect Coconut Palms. Be sure to only plant selections which are resistant to lethal yellowing disease. Ganoderma butt rot can infect the lower trunk and roots, and can kill the palm. Avoid injury to the palm in this area. There is no control for butt rot, only prevention.