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# *Chamaedorea elegans*: Parlor Palm[1]

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*This Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ publication is part of a document series originally written by Edward F. Gilman. Visit* https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/ *to learn more about creating and maintaining attractive landscapes that protect Florida's water resources and environment.*

## Introduction

Parlor palm is native to the rainforests of Mexico and Guatemala. It has an upright growth habit and reaches a height of 2 to 8 feet and spread of 2 to 4 feet (Figure 1). Foliage is evergreen, bipinnately compound, and palmate (Figure 2). The fronds consist of 12 to 40 leaflets. The lower fronds droop from the palm as it grows, and new foliage is atop the bright green, shiny stem. Inconspicuous pale-yellow flowers are produced in panicles within the foliage (Figure 3). Parlor palm is a dioecious plant, with both male and female plant specimens being required for flower and fruit production. Fruit is rounded black drupes and develops on the panicle (Figure 4). Parlor palm is one of the best indoor *Chamaedorea* species, tolerating crowded roots and low light levels. It can also be an effective accent plant in a ground-hugging groundcover in a small-scale garden. While excellent when used for a house plant, parlor palm can also be used outdoors in a shady understory setting as an accent.

Figure 1. Full form—*Chamaedorea elegans*: parlor palm.
Credit: © Juan Carlos López Domínguez, some rights reserved (CC BY-NC) via iNaturalist

Figure 2. Leaf—*Chamaedorea elegans*: parlor palm.
Credit: © Diego Manzano Méndez, some rights reserved (CC BY-NC) via iNaturalist

Figure 3. Flower—*Chamaedorea elegans*: parlor palm.
Credit: © Sarahí Díaz, some rights reserved (CC BY-NC) via iNaturalist

Figure 4. Fruit—*Chamaedorea elegans*: parlor palm.
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## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Chamaedorea elegans*

**Pronunciation:** kam-ee-DOR-ee-uh EL-uh-ganz

**Common name(s):** parlor palm, neanthe bella, bamboo palm, dwarf palm

**Family:** *Arecaceae*

**Plant type:** palm

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10A through 11B (Figures 5 and 6)

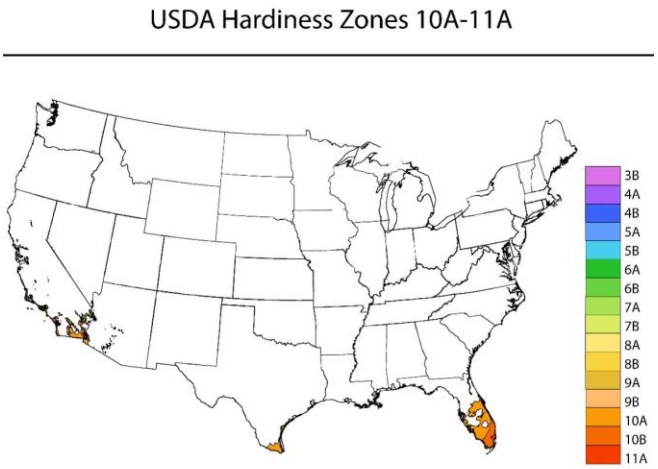


Figure 5. Shaded area represents potential planting zone—USDA Hardiness Zones 10A–11A; 11B within planting zone but not pictured on map.
Credit: This map is based on the 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map. Visit https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/ for specific zone information.

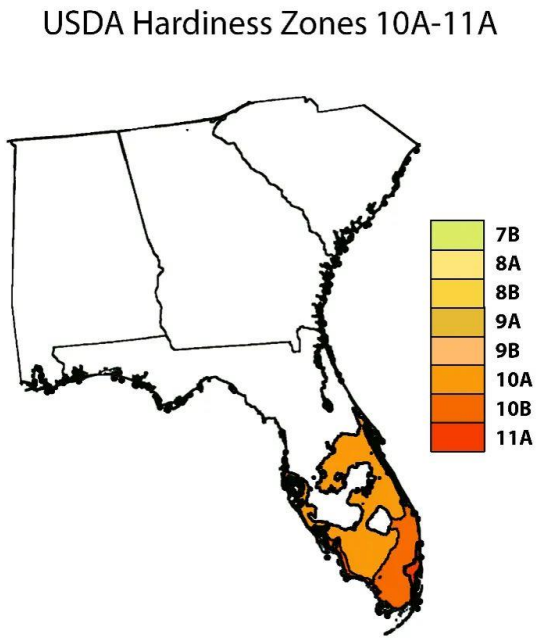


Figure 6. Shaded area represents potential planting zone in the SE Region—USDA Hardiness Zones 10A–11A; 11B within planting zone but not pictured on map.
Credit: This map is based on the 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map. Visit https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/ for specific zone information.

**Planting month for zones 10 and 11:** year-round

**Origin:** native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; suitable for growing indoors; border; accent

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

## Description

**Height:** 2 to 8 feet

**Spread:** 2 to 3 feet

**Plant habit:** upright

**Plant density:** open

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** medium

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate

**Leaf type:** even-bipinnately compound

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** lanceolate

**Leaf venation:** parallel

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristic:** flowers periodically throughout the year; inconspicuous; dioecious

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** less than 0.5 inch

**Fruit cover:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** black

**Fruit characteristic:** persists on plant

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** showy; usually with one stem/trunk

**Current year stem/twig color:** green

**Current year stem/twig thickness:** not applicable

### Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in the shade

**Soil tolerances:** acidic; slightly alkaline; clay; sand; loam

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Soil salt tolerances:** poor

**Plant spacing:** 18 to 24 inches

### Other

**Roots:** usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** evergreen foliage

**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

**Toxicity:** this plant exhibits low toxic characteristics; fruits and sap may cause dermatitis

## Use and Management

Parlor palm should be located away from direct sunlight, in a location with dappled sunlight to full shade. It also requires an area of moderate humidity. This plant is adaptable to soil conditions, given that the soil is well drained; however, organic soil is preferred for optimal growth. Avoid overwatering this plant, as this can lead to root rot. Although parlor palm usually grows 5 to 8 feet tall, the size can be managed by pruning the tallest stem of the cluster nearly to the ground.

When grown as a houseplant, locate in an area with bright, indirect light and control for medium humidity levels. Houseplants will require a rich soil mixture.

Propagation is by seed.

## Design Considerations

Parlor palm provides soft, medium-green, feathered foliage and a delicate, upright clumping form that brings fine texture and a gentle vertical accent to shaded plantings. Its compact habit makes it ideal as a specimen in courtyards, entry alcoves, and patios; a foundation plant on protected north- or east-facing exposures; or a refined understory element beneath open tree canopies; it also performs well in containers. Parlor palm pairs effectively with broad-leafed tropicals such as Philodendron (*Philodendron* spp.), Calathea (various species), and Alocasia (*Alocasia* spp.) for bold contrast; fine-textured companions like ferns and cast iron plant (*Aspidistra elatior*) for layered shade compositions; and low groundcovers such as mondo grass (*Ophiopogon japonicus*), or gingers (various species) to maintain a clean, cohesive base around its clumps.

## Pests and Diseases

Pest issues include mites, nematodes, and scales, especially when used indoors. No disease issues of major concern.

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