

Dypsis 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. The gently arching, 4- to 6-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 frost-free areas. The small, white, inconspicuous flowers are produced all year long on 3-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.



Figure 1. Mature *Dypsis lutescens*: Yellow butterfly palm. Credit: Ed Gilman, UF/IFAS

General Information

Scientific name: *Dypsis lutescens*

Pronunciation: dip-sis loo-TESS-enz

Common name(s): Yellow butterfly palm, bamboo palm, areca palm

Family: *Arecaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 10A through 11 (Figure 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: caution, may be recommended but manage to prevent escape (South); not considered a problem species at this time, may be recommended (North, Central)

Uses: indoors; deck or patio; screen; specimen; container or planter

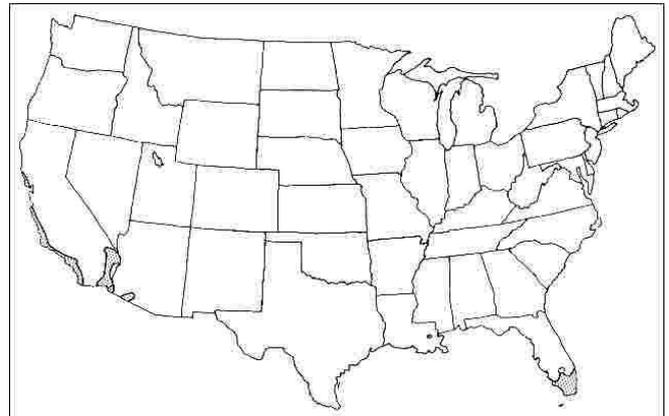


Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 20 to 30 feet

Spread: 8 to 10 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular

Crown shape: palm, upright/erect, vase

Crown density: open

Growth rate: fast

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: spiral

Leaf type: odd-pinnately compound

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: linear

Leaf venation: parallel

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 12 to 18 inches, 18 to 36 inches
Leaf color: green
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: .5 to 1 inch
Fruit covering: fleshy
Fruit color: black, brown, red
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches don't droop; showy; typically multi-trunked; 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; shade tolerant
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained; occasionally wet
Drought tolerance: moderate
Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

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

Yellow butterfly palm prefers fertile, well-drained, acid soil. If growth in full sun, it makes an excellent specimen or screen (on 4-foot centers), but can be grown in the dense shade of patios and porches (or as house plants). 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.

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