

Transplanting *Serenoa Repens* from the Wild

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It has been claimed that our native saw-palmetto, *Serenoa repens*, cannot be successfully transplanted. In fact, it has gained the reputation seldom equalled by any other Florida plant, that "the only way to kill it is to try and transplant it." My experience has been to the contrary, although it certainly is not the easiest palm to move.

During the last forty years I have moved many plants of *Serenoa repens*, but not all of the attempts have been as successful as was the first. The greatest success has been in moving individual young, upright clumps from full sun locations where soil is firm (not loose sand) and where it is near the water table. Old plants with prostrate trunks are much more difficult to move because it is not easy to include all of the vital small feeder roots when digging them. The percentage of losses on moving the older plants is much greater where sec-

tions of trunks must be severed from large clumps. Our greatest success has been when the palms were transplanted in spring or early summer and when they were given ample water, regularly, until established.

My first experience in transplanting these "common old scrub palms" was in 1927. My crew and I were transplanting some cabbage palms, *Sabal Palmetto*, from the Ft. Christmas area to Orlando. Here, fifteen miles inland from the ocean, we found a number of single clusters of the glaucous form of *Serenoa repens* whose known habitat had been thought to be only coastal. The distinguishing glaucous foliage of the coastal form made sharp color contrast as individual specimens were spotted here and there among the masses of the common green form. This was an unusual find and it did not take long to decide that for a trial we would attempt to move one in



19. Individual stems of *Serenoa repens* transplanted from the wild four years ago and now well established beside a roadside tavern near De Land, Florida. Photograph by Dent Smith.

spite of its negative reputation. Selecting a single clump about four feet high and three feet wide, we were able to hold a fair-sized ball of soil around it which was securely wrapped in burlap.

We established this palm in my Orlando garden where it was cared for as we would any other transplanted palm. In spite of assurances from several nurserymen that this plant would not survive transplanting, it suffered very little set-back. In fact, it has a remarkable transplanting history! Three years later it had to be moved again since I decided to build a greenhouse in the very spot where the palm was doing so well. It stood the second transplanting in a very satisfactory way and continued to thrive

in its new location west of the greenhouse.

About eight years later circumstances decided for me that the greenhouse needed expansion again, and unfortunately it had to be pushed out in the direction of the saw-palmetto, which was thriving. The palm had been moved already so many times that I now had no qualms about moving it again. So, we moved it out in front, close to the sidewalk where everyone who passed could see this "blue beauty." No greenhouse could demand this new location, I was sure. However, twenty years later, in 1955, widening of the street took a five-foot strip of frontage so close to the saw-palmetto that it had to be moved again!



20. The author standing beside his much-traveled saw palmetto at "Bromel-la," near Orlando, Florida. Photograph by Dent Smith.

It had grown so large that we had to pick it up with our palm-moving derrick. By this time we were developing our ten acres in the country where the much-travelled palmetto, at long last, found its final resting place. It now gracefully decorates our entrance driveway where we see it every day. The clump is nine feet high and thirty-five feet in circumference; the leaves retain that glaucous, bluish color which gives a pleasing contrast to the usual shades of green around it. Since this palm gives every indication that it likes the spot, it serves as a reminder that the "difficult" saw-palmetto can be successfully moved.

When one is well acquainted with these "scrubby" palms, one cannot help but admire them. Rarely do we find members of the plant world with the stamina that they exhibit. They are a hardy, noble palm for they are able to

withstand fire year after year, endure temperatures down to 10° F., as well as severe droughts. But come what may, the following spring they lift their palmate-leaved heads and send forth graceful sprays of delicate, fragrant, honey-laden flowers.

Even though this saw-palmetto, the commonest palm in Florida, still covers thousands of acres of land throughout the state, it is facing future extinction if developers continue to bulldoze it out in order to make way for subdivisions, orange groves and pasture lands. More of them should be used for beautification purposes. Since it is an intrinsic part of our native Florida landscape scene, it should become a part of our planned and more sophisticated picture. This planned Florida garden necessitates the careful moving of these so-called unmovable palms.

The Doum Palms in India

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Botanical Survey of India, Poona. Photographs by the Author.

Hyphaene thebaica (Linn.) Mart., popularly called the Egyptian Doum Palm, grows along the valley of the Nile in middle and upper Egypt, which is evidently its original home and also along central and northern Sudan and Israel. This species was introduced during the last century to a few gardens in India, particularly to those along the west coast like Mazagaon Hill garden, Bombay-10, Public gardens, Baroda and also the Indian Botanic Garden, Calcutta. It is also recorded from Royal Botanical Gardens, Peradeniya, Ceylon, and Shaik Othman near Aden where it is evidently introduced, as there is no report of its distribution along the Persian and Arabian coast. It flourishes well in rich sandy loam and the palms seen in Bombay

(Fig. 21) and Calcutta gardens grow well, producing large fruits. Though the palm is propagated by seed, it is interesting to record that it has never spread so far in this period of more than half a century to the coastal area or any other suitable locality outside the garden either on the west coast or east coast. On the contrary, a very closely allied species, *Hyphaene indica* Becc., grows luxuriantly in wild condition at several places along the west coast only.

Hyphaene indica Becc. is a very distinct species, though it has been usually confused with the true Egyptian Doum Palm, *H. thebaica*. *H. indica* was first described by Beccari in his paper on the various African species of *Hyphaene* published in *L'Agricoltura Coloniale* ii,