

GROWING
Dypsis utilis
IN PALM BEACH COUNTY

Submitted by Charlie Beck

Dypsis utilis is an upland pinnate palm endemic to Madagascar. It occurs at elevations of 3,000 to 3,300 feet growing streamside in moist or swamp forest. Its conservation status is vulnerable. It was formally named *Vonitra utilis*. It is the largest of all of the *Vonitra* group. The stem can be solitary or clumping and is covered in long strands of fiber much like *Coccothrinax crinita*. The stems typically branch dichotomously 30 to 35 feet above the ground. The branching is upright and closely parallel. The stems can grow 50 feet in habitat.



Our *Dypsis utilis* is 12 years old and was planted in a moist area which is prone to flooding during heavy rain. Its stem is 9 feet tall and 7 inches in diameter. The leaves measure 11 feet long. The most distinguishing feature is the long fibers which cover the stem.

Back in 1999, *Dypsis crinita*, *Dypsis utilis*, and *Dypsis fibrosa* all were readily available for sale. All have long stem fibers and are closely related. There must have been much misidentification of seeds. Our specimens were mistakenly labeled *Dypsis crinita*. Using the key in the book "Palms of Madagascar," I concluded our palms are *Dypsis utilis*. The infrapetiole inflorescences which were branched to three orders clearly identified these palms.

Plant *Dypsis utilis* for its graceful pinnate fronds, interesting stem fiber, and unusual stem branches. This palm will grow in low lying moist areas. Our specimens are planted in the shade, but with an ultimate height of 50 feet, I believe it would also grow well in a sunny location.