

GROWING *Livistona decora* IN PALM BEACH COUNTY

Submitted by Charlie Beck

Livistona decora was previously known as *Livistona decipiens*. *Livistona decora* is native to Australia's tropical east coast. It grows on moist river banks and sandy coastal areas of central Queensland.

Livistona decora is a medium sized solitary palm with palmate leaves. The leaves are finely divided and the leaf tips are pendulous. This is the most distinguishing feature of this palm. The drooping leaf tips shimmer with the slightest of breeze. It reminds me of rippling water.

In habitat, the stems grow 45 feet tall and measure 8 to 10 inches in diameter. The fronds are self cleaning and measure 10 to 12 feet long including the petiole length.

We planted our *Livistona decora* 17 years ago. The stem measures 28 feet tall and 10.5 inches in diameter. This palm is planted in full sun. Even though the overall canopy is 24 feet in diameter, it does not cast deep shade due to its thin leaflets. It is a steady grower and has never displayed any nutritional deficiencies when regularly fertilized and irrigated. It showed no effects from the hurricanes we experienced in the mid 1990s and has never shown any cold damage. *Livistona decora* is reported to be cold hardy in zone 8B so it should grow well in any Palm Beach County location.

Make sure to plant this palm in an area where the full crown is visible. The graceful shimmering leaf tips should be in full view. Many palms planted by enthusiasts are short lived or not well adapted to Palm Beach County. These "hard to grow" species make collecting palms fun, but a garden should also include a framework of tough palms that are long-lived and easy to grow. *Livistona decora* is one of those palms. With its distinctive form, rapid growth, cold and hurricane resistance, *Livistona decora* is a must have for any palm gardener.

GROWING CONDITIONS IN OUR GARDEN FOR <i>Livistona decora</i>	
Location	4 miles from ocean in suburban Lantana
Soil	Sand over a layer of hardpan (pineland flatwood habitat)
Irrigation	¾ inch applied twice a week
Fertilization	4 times a year with Palm special analysis
Light	Full sun
Micronutrient Deficiencies	None observed
Insect Damage	None observed
Hurricane Resistance	Excellent



***Livistona decora* growing in the Beck garden.**

(Photo by Charlie Beck)