

## *Howea forsteriana* Sentry Palm<sup>1</sup>

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### INTRODUCTION

Capable of reaching a height of 40 feet but often seen much shorter, this slow-growing palm has a slim, six-inch-diameter, showy, green trunk (Fig. 1). The trunk resembles bamboo. The graceful, dark green fronds have a smooth, neat appearance, unencumbered by spines or rough bark. Often used as an urn or interior plant, Sentry Palm serves well as a small framing or specimen tree in a shady location.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Howea forsteriana*

**Pronunciation:** HOW-ee-uh for-stair-ee-AY-nuh

**Common name(s):** Sentry Palm, Kentia Palm

**Family:** *Arecaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; suitable for growing indoors; near a deck or patio; specimen

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

### DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 15 to 25 feet

**Spread:** 6 to 10 feet

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

**Crown shape:** palm; upright

**Crown density:** open

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** coarse

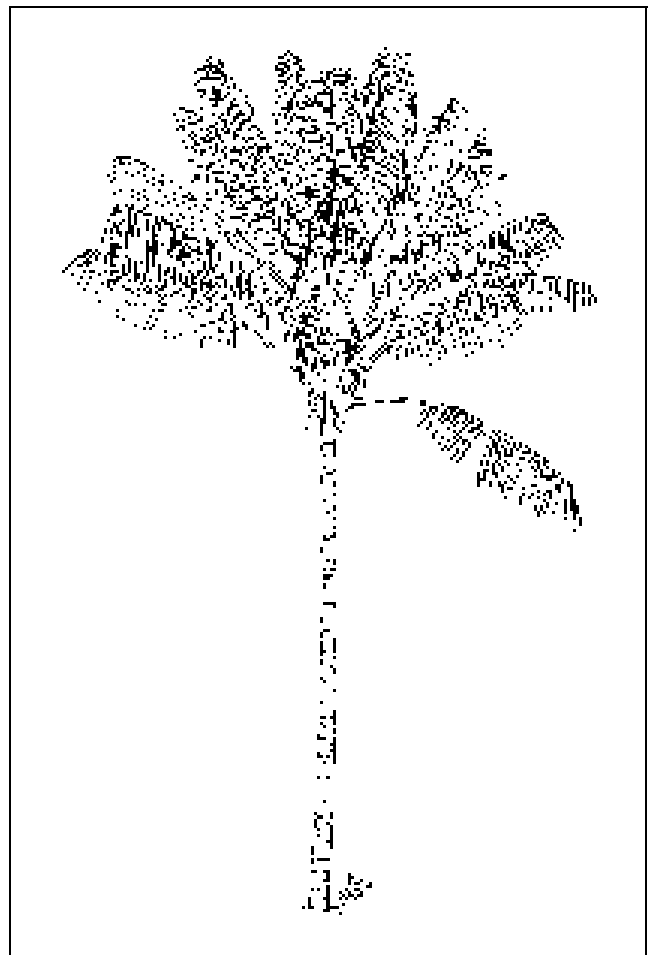


Figure 1. Middle-aged Sentry Palm.

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-297, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.
2. Edward F. Gilman, associate professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Foliage**

- Leaf arrangement:** spiral (Fig. 3)
- Leaf type:** odd pinnately compound
- Leaflet margin:** entire
- Leaflet shape:** lanceolate
- Leaflet venation:** parallel
- Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen
- Leaflet blade length:** 12 to 18 inches
- Leaf color:** green
- Fall color:** no fall color change
- Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

- Flower color:** white
- Flower characteristics:** inconspicuous and not showy

**Fruit**

- Fruit shape:** oval; round
- Fruit length:** 1 to 3 inches
- Fruit covering:** fleshy
- Fruit color:** red; yellow

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

**Trunk and Branches**

- Trunk/bark/branches:** grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns
- Pruning requirement:** needs little pruning to develop a strong structure
- Breakage:** resistant
- Crown shaft:** no

**Culture**

- Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in the shade
- Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained
- Drought tolerance:** moderate
- Aerosol salt tolerance:** none

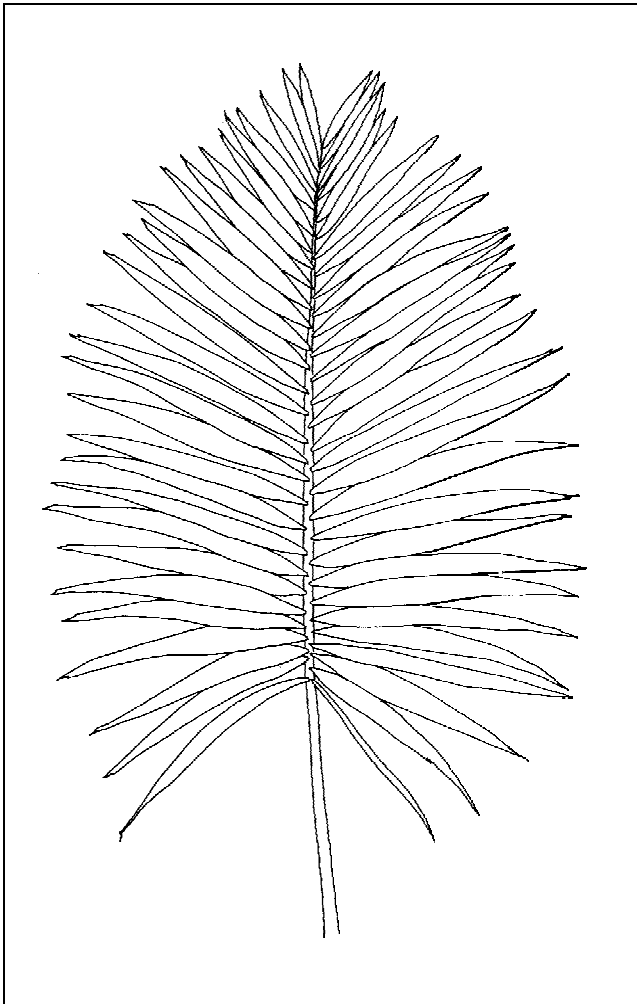


Figure 3. Foliage of Sentry Palm.

### Pests

Scale.

### Diseases

Lethal yellowing disease.

### Other

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** not known to be susceptible

**Pest resistance:** very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect tree health or aesthetics

### USE AND MANAGEMENT

Sentry Palm requires partial to deep shade when young, and fertile, well-drained soils. It is not salt-tolerant. It should be protected from frost, winds, and keep lawn grasses away from the root system. It makes a nice house plant if it is not overwatered.

Propagation is by seed.