



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Sabal minor*¹

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Introduction

The Bluestem Palmetto has a trunk that, in Florida, rarely emerges from the ground and rarely produces side shoots (Fig. 1). *Sabal minor* is reported to have reached 18-foot-tall in Texas. Height appears to be governed by genetic origin, ranging from 3 to 8-foot-tall in Florida. The dark green, costapalmate leaves vary in size depending on the age of the plant but may reach a length of 5 feet. The fan-shaped leaves of the Bluestem Palmetto are palmately-lobed and segmented with the segments split to 2/3 their length. The leaves of this palm are green to bluish-green in color, and the petioles are unarmed. The inflorescence of this palm exceed the length of the leaves and bear small, white flowers that are strongly fragrant. The summer flowers are followed by small, shiny black fruit.

General Information

Scientific name: *Sabal minor*

Pronunciation: SAY-bull MY-ner

Common name(s): Dwarf Palmetto, Bluestem Palmetto

Family: *Palmae*

Plant type: palm

USDA hardiness zones: 7B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 7: year round

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: native to Florida

Uses: accent; border

Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

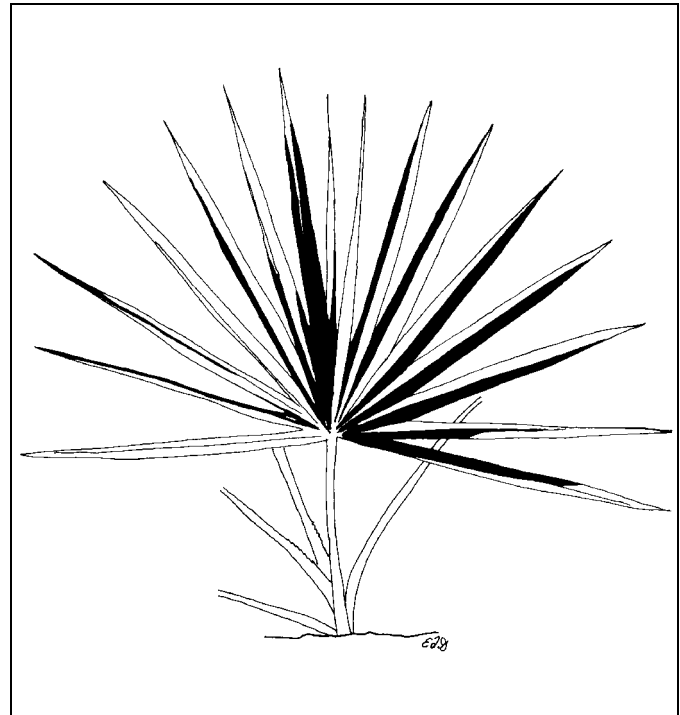


Figure 1. Dwarf Palmetto.

Description

Height: 2 to 7 feet

Spread: 3 to 5 feet

Plant habit: palm; upright

Plant density: open

Growth rate: slow

Texture: coarse

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

- Leaf arrangement:** alternate
- Leaf type:** simple
- Leaf margin:** lobed
- Leaf shape:** star-shaped
- Leaf venation:** palmate
- Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen
- Leaf blade length:** more than 36 inches
- Leaf color:** blue or blue-green
- Fall color:** no fall color change
- Fall characteristic:** not showy

Flower

- Flower color:** white
- Flower characteristic:** summer flowering; pleasant fragrance

Fruit

- Fruit shape:** round
- Fruit length:** less than .5 inch
- Fruit cover:** fleshy
- Fruit color:** black

Fruit characteristic: attracts birds

Trunk and Branches

- Trunk/bark/branches:** typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; can be trained to grow with a short, single trunk; not particularly showy
- Current year stem/twig color:** not applicable
- Current year stem/twig thickness:** not applicable

Culture

- Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun
- Soil tolerances:** acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay; occasionally wet
- Drought tolerance:** high
- Soil salt tolerances:** moderate
- Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Bluestem Palmetto will perform quite well as a specimen in a small garden. Its large leaves and small size make it stand out in the company of other plants. It is also impressive when massed as a tall ground cover. Plant shrubs 4 to 6 feet apart to establish a dense ground cover.

Sabal minor is valued for its hardiness and tropical appearance. It must have a full sun to partial shade position in the landscape. The plant is adaptable to many soil types as long as they are well-drained, and it is drought tolerant. These palms will even grow well on relatively shallow soils.

This palm is readily propagated from seed.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.