Needle Palm  
*Rhapidophylhum hystrix*

**GENERAL INFORMATION:**
Scientific name: *Rhapidophylhum hystrix*
Pronunciation: rah-pid-o-fill-lum hiss-triks
Common name(s): Needle Palm
Family: Arecaceae
Origin: Southeastern United States

Needle Palm is a small shrubby fan palm that grows to about six feet in height. Multiple stems create an ever widening rounded clump of about six feet. The needle palm doesn't form a trunk but instead has multiple stems. These stems are composed of old leaf bases and fiber. The fan-shaped leaves are glossy deep green on top with a dull silvery white underside. Tiny yellow to purplish-brown flowers appear irregularly in spring and early summer. The spines or "needles" form at the base and are dark brown or black, very slender and sharp and grow from four to ten inches long. This palm is native to the southeastern United States. Populations can be found in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Florida. Needle palm usually grows on shady wooded slopes and in moist bottomlands along streams. It prefers fairly moist, well drained soils with lots of organic matter but is very adaptable to other conditions. It is very cold hardy, can be adapted to full sun, and has a high drought tolerance. Established plants are perfect for a garden that only relies on rain. Needle palm is an excellent specimen plant for small spaces near patios or entry ways. In the garden, the needle palm provides a rich green backdrop for flowering plants. Mass plantings of needle palm can also serve as security hedges. Needle palm can also be used near swimming pools because of its ability to endure continual splashes of chlorinated water. It should not be planted close to walkways where passersby may be pricked by its “needles.” Plantings of needle palm are able to trap fallen leaves and other debris and this “auto-mulching” further reduces maintenance.

*Selected from Palm Prints, Sarasota County Extension*