**Washington Palm**
*Washingtonia robusta*

**INTRODUCTION**
Commonly seen at 40 to 50 feet but capable of soaring to 80 feet in height, Washington Palm is quickly recognized as the much-used, straight, single-trunked street palm of years past. The lower leaves persist on the tree after they die, forming a dense, brown, shaggy covering below the living, bright green, broad, fan-shaped leaves, giving it the common name of petticoat palm. These dead fronds are known to be a fire hazard and a popular bedding roost for rodents and, because of this, must be removed by law in some areas. The sharply barbed leaf petioles and tall, thin trunks make frond removal a rather unpleasant task, but some people think the rapid growth rate and statuesque appearance more than make up for this trouble.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**
Scientific name: *Washingtonia robusta*
Pronunciation: wosh-ing-TOE-nee-uh roe-BUS-tuh
Common name(s): Washington Palm, Mexican Washington Palm
Family: Arecaceae
USDA hardiness zones: 9 through 11
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

**DESCRIPTION**
Height: 60 to 90 feet
Spread: 10 to 15 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: medium
Texture: coarse

Foliage
Leaf arrangement: alternate; spiral
Leaf type: costapalmate
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: star-shaped
Leaf venation: palmate
Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen; evergreen
Leaf blade length: >36 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower
Flower color: white
Flower characteristics: showy; summer flowering

Fruit
Fruit shape: oval; round
Fruit length: < .5 inch
Fruit covering: fleshy
Fruit color: black
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; not particularly showy; 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 full sun
Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; acidic; occasionally wet; alkaline; well-drained
Drought tolerance: high
Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

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: long-term health usually not affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT
Washington Palm makes a dramatic statement in the large landscape and creates a striking accent for multi-storied homes but often grows out of scale in most landscapes with one-story buildings because all of the fronds are at the top of the palm. It looks like
a telephone pole with a green hat. *Washingtonia filifera* is a much better choice in unirrigated landscapes, since it grows more slowly, is shorter, and the trunk is thicker. Washington Palm needs full sun for best growth but will endure some shade while young. It will tolerate poor soil and drought, and is hardy to about 20-degrees F. Transplant with a large root ball to ensure survival. *Washingtonia filifera* is shorter, has a thicker trunk, and is better suited for planting in dry urban landscapes, such as in Texas. They reportedly suffer and often die from root rot when irrigated. Select *Washingtonia robusta* in an irrigated landscape and for the eastern U.S. Propagation is by seed.

Pests
Coconut mealybug, palm leaf skeletonizer, palm platid planthopper and a variety of scales infest this palm.

Diseases
Root rot can occur if this palm is planted on a wet site.

*by Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson*