Ornamental Palms

- The production of ornamental palms is a relatively small industry, yet quite popular for those who produce on small acreage or ranchettes. Typically started from seed, ornamental palms can be harvested for sale as small trees in about 5 years.

- Even for one species, germination time from seed is so variable that predictions and generalizations are almost meaningless. At best, one could state that some genera or species germinate more quickly than others. Seeds are typically checked with a pinch test, as often it is found that some seeds are rotten and need to be replanted.

- All palms are part of the largest family of flowering plants belonging to the monocot division, as is Bermuda grass, corn, wheat, onion and banana. There are roughly 2600 currently known species of ornamental palms, most of which are restricted to the tropical, subtropical and the warmer climates of the world.

- Palm Canyon, in the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge, North of Yuma, is known for having the last significant location in Arizona where palm trees grow in their natural habitat.

- Most palms are distinguished by their large, evergreen leaves. However, many palms are exceptions and exhibit an enormous diversity in physical characteristics.

- Palms are one of the most well-known and extensively cultivated plant families. They have had an important role to humans throughout much of history. Ornamental palms are widely used in landscaping for their exotic appearance, making them one of the most economically important plants in the world. In many historical cultures, palms are symbols for such ideas as victory, peace, and fertility. Today, palms remain a popular symbol for the tropics and vacation spots.

- Whether shrubs, trees or vines palms are limited to two methods of growth. The common representation is that of a shoot or trunk ending in a crown of leaves. Palms may also prefer to grow in sparse to dense clusters, although several palm genera have both solitary and clustering members.

- For Yuma landscaping, especially in areas with soils containing high levels of salt, the Canary Island is the most salt tolerant palm known.

- Palms come in a variety of sizes. The Sea Coconut is a palm with the largest seeds of any plant at up to 20 inches in diameter and weighing over 60 pounds each. Raffia palms have leaves up to 75 feet long and 15 feet wide and are known to have the largest leaves of any plant. The Corypha palms have the largest flower of any plant, up to 25 feet tall and contain-
ing millions of small flowers. Colombia’s national tree *Ceroxylon quindiuense*, is the tallest palm tree in the world, reaching heights of 180 feet tall.

- The fruits of most palms are somewhat unusual in that they float. Seed distribution in the coconut palm is exceptional as the coconut, when mature, falls onto the beach and is carried on the tide, sometimes for long distances, to germinate elsewhere. Floating coconuts are common and capable of germinating after floating in the sea for up to 110 days.

- Palms are the first modern family of monocots that is clearly represented in the fossil record and first appeared in the fossil record around 80 million years ago. The first modern species or palm appeared 69-70 million years ago, confirmed by fossil records.

- Palms appear to have undergone an early period of extreme adaptation. By 60 million years ago, many of the modern, specialized genera of palms appeared and became widespread and common, much more widespread than their range today. Because of this early spread, palms are valuable in studying the plant genetics.

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