PLANT FACT SHEET

Serenoa repens (W. Bartram) Small

GENUS *Serenoa* **FAMILY** Arecaceae

COMMON NAMES Saw palmetto, Silver saw palmetto

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Nuts, Cabbage, Fruit, Palm heart

The fruit are eaten.
The fruit can be used to make a drink.
The palm hearts are eaten.
The seeds are eaten.

DESCRIPTION

A fan palm with a short trunk. Sometimes it is creeping or underground. It forms clumps and is prickly. The trunks are slim and can be 3-6 m high. They are covered with fibres and leaf bases. The trunks can form branches, especially if the tip is damaged. The leaves are fan shaped. They are stiff and the leaf stalks are thorny. The leaves are 1 m long and the leaf stalks 1-1.6 m long. The leaves can be green, blue-green or blue-silver. The leaves are held stiffly erect. It produces flower stalks among the leaves. Flowers contain both sexes. The fruit are oval and 2 cm long. They are black when ripe. They are edible. Each fruit contains a single seed.

HABITAT

A tropical and subtropical plant. It grows in colonies in woodlands and coastal dunes. It suits seasonally moist and dry climates. They need well drained soils. They can tolerate salt exposure. They are cold sensitive. They need a sunny location. They can tolerate fire. It suits hardiness zones 8-11.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. Plants are easy to grow but slow growing. Single plants can produce fertile seeds. Plants can be divided but this is difficult unless plants are small. Plants are difficult to transplant.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It is slow growing. It normally flowers in warm, wet months.

NOTES

There is only one Serenoa palm. The seeds are used in medicine. It is useful as a medicine for Prostate problems. It contains Sitosterine which has oestrogen-like properties.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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