



Palm Garden Fact Sheet

Overview

Palms were Henry Huntington's second favorite type of tree after oaks, so a palm garden was a natural idea for the estate. The primary objective of the garden was to test the suitability of different palms as landscaping material for home gardens, parks, and street and highway plantings in this climate. The garden is now a collection of plants that are hardy enough to survive the cold snaps that occur here from time to time, and constitutes one of the broadest representations of palms on public display in California.

History

The palm collection at the Huntington dates to 1905 when William Hertrich, building on Henry Huntington's interest in the plants, started a 5-acre garden on a slope east of the house and west of the Desert Garden. At the start, mature palms were boxed and brought in. Over the years, periods of severe cold have set back the collection, even killing off half of the tender or young plants. During the 1960s, the garden was revitalized. The palm collection has now grown to more than two hundred species found throughout the grounds, including notably in the Jungle Garden, Conservatory, Palm Drive, and North Vista.

Landscape

The Palm Garden consists of planting beds surrounded by lawns which allow one to judge the plants from a distance. Over time, the palm garden has formed a microclimate where the large, old survivors of early frosts protect the small and less hardy trees. Special microclimates in the garden are used to test the suitability of the tenderest plants, allowing new species to be introduced.

Collections

- JELLY OR FOUNTAIN PALM (*Butia capitata*): Native to Argentina and Brazil; The leaves are not self cleaned and stay on the trunk for many years; Orange fruit are edible and are made into jelly
- CANARY ISLAND PALM (*Phoenix canariensis*); Native to the Canary Islands; The most widely planted ornamental trees in the subtropical region of the world; Once established it grows rapidly and takes up lots of room
- CHILEAN WINE PALM (*Jubaea chilensis*): This genus has only one species and it is one of the largest palm in the palm family; The tree's massive trunk has a sap called "palm honey" is rich in sugar. The Chileans at one time collected the sap and unfortunately most of the trees in that area have been cut down.
- DATE PALM (*Phoenix dactylifera*); This multiple trunked clump tree is Native to the Middle East; This palm bears the true edible dates which are eating raw, made into jam,

or fermented to make assortment of alcoholic beverages; This palm was the first exotic palm introduced to CA by Spanish missionaries in the late eighteenth century.

- EUROPEAN FAN PALM (*Chamaerops humilis*): The only palm native to Europe (from Portugal to Italy); It has multiple stems but can rarely be found growing as single trunked specimens
- FORMOSA PALM (*Arenga engleri*): Native to Taiwan and has multiple stems; The two large clumps were planted here around 1940
- MAZARI PALM (*Nannorrhops Ritchiana*): Native to Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan; One of the hardiest palms in the world; Very slow growing.
- CHINESE WINDMILL PALM. (*Trachycarpus fortunei*): One of the most cold-hardy of all palms; The oldest plants of this species were planted here in 1908; Native to China
- NEEDLE PALM (*Rhaphidophyllum hystrix*): Native to the USA (Southeast); These two large old plants in the north east were planted here in 1932.
- CALIFORNIA PALM (*Washingtonia filifera*): These large palms were grown from seed collected in Mexico in 1968; Native to the USA (south eastern California and Western Arizona).
- GIANT FISHTAIL PALM (*Caryota gigas*): The largest of all fishtail palms; Native to Thailand; All fishtail palm die when they flower
- BLUE HESPER PALM (*Brahea armata*): Native to Mexico; Bluish leaf color; Distinctive long inflorescences grow way below the crown