



## FYN Garden Q & A Series

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### FYN TOPIC: Royal Palms

**Question:** My royal palm is 20 feet tall and looks mostly healthy except for the newly emerging leaf. The leaf itself looks normal in size and shape but instead of being green, it is bright yellow. Another royal palm within a few feet of this one had to be removed from a lightning strike. What's wrong and should it too be treated or removed? Tom S., Cape Coral

**Answer:** Royal palms (*Roystonea elata*) are native to Florida and grow rapidly this time of year. So fast, in fact, that one new leaf develops each month. I expect your affected palm leaf or frond may look greener as it emerges fully. But first, let's rule out a few common problems with royals.

First, the royal palm bug causes scattered yellow spots only on the lower surface of new leaves. Frizzle-top is a condition with distorted new growth emerging looking small, stunted, streaky, chlorotic and grayish looking. Since neither of these problems fit your description, I suspect a problem occurred last summer causing poor iron uptake by the palm roots from the surrounding soil.

My guess is root injury may have triggered your problem when the adjacent palm was dug up. Use a palm-blend fertilizer with roughly an analyses of 8-2-12-(4Mg), containing iron and manganese (sulfate) and one that has 100% of its nitrogen, potassium and magnesium in a slow release form. If new growth continues to emerge yellow in color, use a suitable palm fertilizer containing 2% iron with other nutrients like manganese, magnesium & potassium. One example is a product labeled as Nurserymen's Sure-Gro. Correcting any problems now using fertilizer won't green up the affected leaf. However, subsequent leaves should eventually emerge looking healthy. Check the soil pH by bringing a soil sample to the Extension Office for free testing. Your palm may be growing in very alkaline soil with a pH greater than 7.5. And, eliminate any turf growing under the canopy of the palm and apply three inches -no deeper-of fresh mulch without touching the trunk.

Thomas Becker is an extension agent for the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods (FYN) program at the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the Horticulture Help Desk at 239-533-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. or by emailing [Extgardener@leegov.com](mailto:Extgardener@leegov.com). Visit his Web page at <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml>

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