



Garden q & a
STEPHEN BROWN

Areca Hedge Pruning

February 2

Question: I have a border of areca palms around the perimeter of my lot to provide privacy to the pool cage area. They have now grown to a height of about 12 to 14 feet and are shading the pool area. What is the best way to prune to reduce the height, but not thin the lower area of the palms so we can continue to have privacy from the street and adjacent lots?



Answer: This palm is a clustering palm. The colony expands by sending up new growth from underground rhizomes. Plants that multiply by rhizomes are a single plant until a sectional split occurs. Thus, a single areca clump is considered a solitary plant. It has suckers that are emerging growth. These suckers develop trunks often called canes which are topped by a bevy of fronds. As you've noted, there is an abundance of new growth at the bottom of the clump. Remove the tallest canes to an acceptable amount. Use a sharp pruning saw to cut the canes as close to the ground as possible. They will not regrow. You can also prune out some of the shorter canes and suckers. The former will not regrow, the latter may resprout. You can thin the width of the row by using a spade to root out canes and suckers on the margin. Canes and suckers removal can be done at anytime of the year. Also remove any dead fronds to improve the appearance of the row.

Stephen Brown is a horticulture agent with the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the horticulture desk at 461-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. or by e-mailing brownsh@leegov.com. Visit his web page at <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/hort/GardenHome.shtml> "Garden Doctor" video clips <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/Video.shtml> and flowering trees information at http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/GardenPubsA_Z.shtml