The Case of the Decapitated Paurotis

Situation: A customer called the horticulture desk, (239) 461-7504, wanting to know what happened to the tops of his paurotis palms. The crown were detached from the top of the canes.

The Cause: When this happens, suspect ganoderma. You can usually confirm this by checking the base of the palm. If by checking you find a conspicuous bracket or "conch," the disease is confirmed. Ganoderma is an incurable fungal disease of older landscape palms. In our two most common clumping palms, paurotis or Everglades palm, Acoelorrhaphe wrightii, and areca palm, Chrysalidocarpus lutescens, the disease is usually noticed upon the complete loss of several crowns. In solitary palms, such as queen palms, Syagrus romanzoffiana, the crown persists, drooping unto the trunk with the young spear leaf the last to fall. Clumping palms can persist with the disease for many years as new canes replace diseased canes. Solitary palms are quickly overcome.

Control: There is no control. Remove all visible conchs and destroy them. The palm should be removed as soon as possible to prevent its spread to healthy palms. Incineration is the best method of disposal. Do not replant another palm in the diseased location since infection may occur in later years. You can feel
comfortable replanting with a broad-leafed tree.