The Case of the Drooping Fronds

The fallen crown of *Phoenix canariensis*

Drooping fronds on *Phoenix canariensis*

The culprit: The palmetto weevil, *Rynchophorus cruentatus*

**Situation:** Customer called the horticulture desk alarmed that the fronds of her Canary Island Date Palm had collapsed within days.

**Cause:** When this happens suspect the palmetto weevil. Check the base of a fallen frond or pull one from the palm and carefully examine it. You’ll probably notice, still feeding, a large larvae belonging to *Rynchophorus cruentatus*.

This condition appears common in well established Canary Island Date palms. In this case, the palm was at least 20 years old. The weevil also frequently attacks cabbage palms (*Sabal palmetto*) and to a lesser extent the Mexican fan palm (*Washingtonia robusta*) and Bismark palms (*Bismarckia noblis*). Adult females lay eggs in the leaf bases of the crowns and the large larvae quickly tunnel into the heart of the palms destroying it.
**Control:** Palms in the above condition cannot be saved and should be immediately removed. Newly transplanted palms should be treated with an insecticide as a preventative. For particularly prized palms, I recommend a preventative insecticidal application every one to two years.