Palms not Poisonous

Question: I have been told that several palms in our community should be cut down because they may be poisonous, or could cause irritation if someone rubbed against them. Although the palms have been around for 25 years, the possibility of liability has surfaced. Would you know of any poisonous palms? Are they a threat to safety?

- George F., e-mail

Answer: I know of no palms in our landscape that are listed as poisonous. In fact, many palms are edible including or native cabbage palms. In some countries, there are commercial palm groves dedicated to harvesting “hearts-of-palms” as a delicacy. The nut from coconut palms is eaten throughout the tropic. The by product of the nut can be found in cakes and candy bars in this country. The oil from the nuts of the African oil palm and the coconut palm are used to produce cooking oil. The trunks and leaves of palms are used in the construction of buildings. While some individual may be allergic to different plant parts, that would be most unusual with respect to palms. The greatest dangers some palm possess are their armed fronds. Phoenix palms, including Canary Island date palm, Senegal date palm, and pygmy date palm, all have dangerous spines at the base of their leaves. However, it’s normally those that cut these leaves who suffer the consequence.

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