Salt Tolerant Palms
March 22, 2008

Question: We have determined that our newly planted palms were watered with city water when in the nursery. Their first exposure to our highly salted water was when they were planted 2.5 weeks ago. Is it too late to start watering them with a soaker hose and city water or do you think they are already acclimated to the high salt water?

- Adrian W., South Lee County

Answer: It is never too late to water a plant using soaker hose and city water. However, plants cannot acclimate themselves to high salt content as they can to drought or reduced irrigation. Planting salt tolerant palms is the only way to insure their tolerance of highly salty irrigation water. However, in south Florida, the landscape is usually a mix of plants with varying degree of salt tolerance. Using highly salty irrigation water might not affect some species but could eventually limit your overall plant palette. Highly salt tolerant palms include cabbage, coconut, and ‘Medjool’ palms. They need no acclimation to most salty irrigation water.

Stephen Brown is a horticulture agent with the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the horticulture desk at 533-7504 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