

Separation of Upper and Lower Palm Crowns caused by Heavy Fruit Loads

Stephen H. Brown, Lee County Horticulture Agent

Fruit (nuts) produced by many palms are often numerous, conspicuous and weighty. The inflorescence (flower panicles) that bear the fruit grows around the top of the trunks. For several palm species, the fruit is produced among the lower leaves. These are the palms without crown-shafts. As the fruit develop their combined weight force down the leaves on which they rest. This can cause a distinct separation between the upper unaffected leaves and the affected lower leaves. This phenomenon seems to be particularly noticeable in palms of the *Phoenix* genus. They include the Canary Island date palm (*Phoenix canariensis*), the date palm (*P. dactylifera*), the pigmy date palm (*P. roebelinii*) and the Sylvestris palm (*P. sylvestris*). Chinese fan palm (*Livistona chinensis*) is similarly affected. Once the fruit is gone, the leaves do not “pop” back up. To avoid palm crown separation, in years of heavy fruit load, remove the inflorescence before they begin to fruit. Removing the inflorescence will not affect the health of the palm.



The *P. dactylifera* ‘Medjool’ on the left has a heavy fruit load and a separated crown. The ‘Medjool’ on the right has no fruit and an intact canopy.



The separated crown of a ‘Medjool’ caused by its heavy fruit load.



The separated crown of a 'Medjool' caused by its heavy fruit load.



The separating crown of a Canary Island date palm caused by its heavy fruit load.



The separating crown of a Chinese fan palm caused by its heavy fruit load.



Palms, such as this Royal (*Roystonea regia*), with crownshafts produce fruit below and away from the crowns.

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This fact sheet was reviewed Dr. Tim Broschat, Fort Lauderdale REC; Peggy Cruz, Lee County Extension; Connie Brennan and Kitty Tyler, Lee County Master Gardeners.

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