



Scientific Name: *Sabal uresana*

Botanical Family: Arecaceae

Common Name: Sonoran palmetto

Botanical Characteristics:

This desert adapted palm tree grows to heights of 8 - 18 m (27 - 60 ft) with a canopy spread of 7 m (23 ft) (1, 2, 3, 7). The trunk is dark brown and usually single/unbranched (2, 3). This fan palm has palmately compound leaves ("fronds") which 180 - 250 cm (70.9 - 98.4 in) long from petiole base to leaf apex (2). The leaf blade is about 90 cm (3 feet) long, deeply divided, grey-green (glaucous green to silvery blue) in color with smooth (entire) margins and stringy fibers in between the leaflets (2). The leaves are costapalmate, wherein their leaflets are joined together for some or most of their length but are attached along a costa, (an extension of the petiole) extending into the leaf blade (2, 3). This is typical for members of the Sabal genus. A key diagnostic feature of this Sabal species is the presence of smooth petioles which extend well into the bluish leaf blades (4). Where the base of the petiole attaches to the trunk, it is attached in a spiral arrangement, being somewhat twisted like a screw (2). (4) Leaves are persistent and form a dense, rounded crown (1, 2).

Creamy, 2 cm (1inch) long cup-shaped flowers appear in a large cluster from the base of the foliage during spring, followed by black drupes (3, 7).

Compound: Sab ure

Geographic Origin: Northwestern Mexico

Ecozone Origin: Nearctic

Biome Origin:

Natural History:

An endemic palm, confined to the Sierra Madre Occidental. Mexico Northeast, Mexico (3). It is naturally found in the state of Sabal in northwest Mexico extending south to Chihuahua and northern Sinaloa along the Sierra Madre Occidental (2, 3). It is commonly found growing along riverbanks and drainage lines or in desert scrub and coastal dunes (2). It is also found in lowland dry tropical forests as well as in valleys and foothills of oak forests at altitudes of 1,200 m (3,937 ft) (2,3). The species name "uresana" refers to Ures, Mexico, where the plant is quite common. This palm is also commonly known in Mexico as "palma blanca" (1).

Cultivation Notes:

Sabal uresana can be propagated easily from seed. Plants are adapted to a wide range of climates. They are rates for USDA Hardiness zone 9a (Sunset climate zones H1, H2, H13-17 and 19-24) (3, 6). The plant can tolerate both hot coastal and inland areas, as well as full sun and drying winds in open and exposed sites (2, 3, 6). It is even reported to tolerate severe frost being potentially suited to USDA Zone 8a (3, 7). As this palm is also grown in tubs and planter boxes when young, it can be grown in colder climates if taken indoors during the winter (2). It prefers very well drained soils that are either dry and sandy, or more rich and moist, with moderate to low fertility and pH from slightly acidic to alkaline (6.0 to 8.0) (2, 6, 7). *Sabal uresana* is slow growing and long lived (2, 3). It does grow faster, however, than the beautiful blue-leaved *Brahea armata*, and is a good alternative if a striking blue accent plant is desired (6). Further, as it is more cold hardy than the blue-leaved *Bismarckia nobilis*, it is also a good alternative for that species in exposed areas or cooler climates (6).

Ethnobotany:

S. uresana is not only prized by collectors but it is also a highly valued and economically important tree in many regions of Mexico (1, 7). The Sonoran palmetto is appreciated for its blue-green foliage colour, single trunk and upright growth habit (3). It is commonly used as a landscape ornamental plant being used in parks or large gardens as single specimens or in mass along avenues (3). It is also used to give a tropical effect to landscapes, and to enhance water features or waterways (2).

The new, unexpanded leaves are used extensively to make baskets, mats, rope, and other items. The older leaves are also used to make brooms (3). The fibers that hang between the leaflets have also been used to make saddle blankets (1). The petioles of the huge leaves are also sometimes used to build racks for aging cheese, used as stirring sticks, or for broom handles. The trunks of this palm have been used to build corrals and as crossbeams for houses (1). Like *S. palmetto*, the heart

of the palm or the young bud can be eaten, which kills the plant 1). The sugary mesocarp of the fruit is locally eaten fresh or cooked (1).

Height: 20 - 50 feet

Width: 16 - 20 feet

Growth Rate: Slow

Grow Season: Summer

Flower Season: ForeSummer

Color: White

Function: Accent

Spread: Non-spreading

Allergen: Non-allergenic

Invasive: No

Toxicity: Benign

Hardy: Hardy

Water Use: Low water Use

Resources:

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