



Horticulture

TRANSPLANTING SABAL PALMS Step-by-Step Instructions

Lee 8/2000A

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Introduction

The native cabbage or sabal palm (*Sabal palmetto*) is the official state tree of Florida and is a prominent feature in Florida's landscape. The palm is highly adaptive, tough, tolerant of a wide range of soils, and is hurricane resistant. When planted six to ten feet on center, sabal palms provide desirable shade. Sabal palms, including large-sized palms, can be transplanted with high success if a few simple precautions are taken. This fact sheet provides specific proven techniques to increase the success of sabal palm transplanting.

Step-by-Step Transplant Instructions

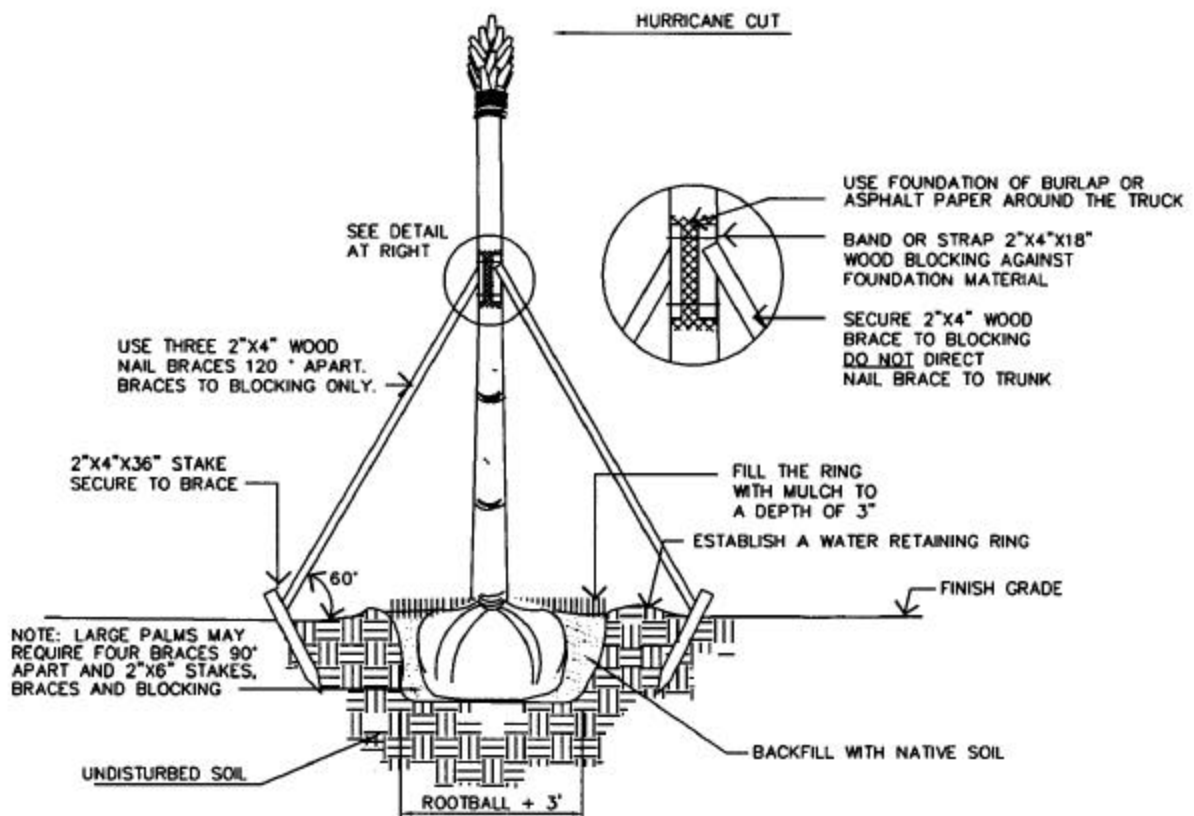
1. Use gasoline powered tree spade or heavy steel shanked digging spade with a clean well-honed cutting edge to dig the largest possible root ball. Usually to 18 inches from the edge of the trunk.
2. Remove the palm from ground. Take care not to damage the hidden bud located within the center of the canopy.
3. Using clean sharp hand spades, trim the root ball into circular shape 13 to 16 inches from the outer edge of the trunk.
4. Two methods of pruning fronds for landscape transplant (select one):
 - a. Remove oldest (brown) fronds. Tie the remaining fronds tightly together with a biodegradable twine. Do not disturb the bud.
 - b. Remove all fronds otherwise known as "hurricane" or "cigar cut." This recommended pruning technique gives the highest rate of establishment but must be carefully done.
5. Secure the palm on a flat bed truck and transport it to the planting site. Make sure the center of the bud is well protected.
6. Keep the root ball moist between removal and installation.
7. Prepare planting hole 1-2 times the diameter of the trunk but at the same depth as the root ball.
8. Back-fill the planting hole with the same soil that had been removed. There is no need to amend the planting hole, but if it is amended, use a fill similar to that of the planting hole. The amendment should not exceed 25 percent by volume of the soil removed from the hole.
9. Carefully set the palm into the planting hole. Make sure it is planted the same depth as it was in the field. Planting too deeply will cause root suffocation and lead to nutritional deficiencies, root rot, and frequently the death of the palm.
10. Secure and stake the palm as illustrated in the diagram. **DO NOT DRIVE NAILS DIRECTLY INTO THE PALM.**

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11. Establish a water-retaining ring around the palm three feet from the trunk. The ring should slope gently toward the trunk.
12. Fill the ring with mulch to a depth of three inches. Keep the mulch at least three inches away from the trunk.
13. Irrigation:
 - a. Palms with fronds remaining: Fill the ring with 50 gallons of water three times weekly.
 - b. Palms with hurricane cut: Fill the ring with 20 to 25 gallons of water three times weekly.
14. In both cases, after four weeks, reduce irrigation to twice weekly. Water twice weekly for four weeks, and then reduce irrigation to once weekly for an additional four weeks. Twelve weeks after planting, cease irrigation if the palm appears healthy. However, during drought, water once a week for up to two years. For each inch of rain, skip one scheduled irrigation treatment.
15. As soon as new growth begins to appear, loosen tied fronds. This will happen between 3-6 months after transplanting, depending on the time of year and the health of the palm.
16. Begin fertilization after new growth begins. Fertilize three to four times per year with a 2-1-3- ratio fertilizer at a rate of one to two pounds per 100 square feet. For best results use a slow release formulation.
17. Remove staking and burlap or asphalt paper rap after successful palm establishment. Removal usually occurs approximately one year after palm installation.



PLANTING AND STAKING SABAL PALM

NOT TO SCALE