

# Palm Tour

## Gentle Winds Palm Tree Guide and Walking Tour

Welcome to Gentle Winds on the island of St. Croix, USVI. This guide charts a walking tour of the 15 varieties of palm trees at Gentle Winds. The 3/4 mile walk starts at the main entrance, winds around the buildings, and ends at the Great Room. Pre-load this page on your phone before starting the tour or use the PDF version ([https://gentlewindsof.org/files.wordpress.com/2021/04/gw\\_palm\\_tour\\_2.pdf](https://gentlewindsof.org/files.wordpress.com/2021/04/gw_palm_tour_2.pdf)).

With thanks to the Humphrey family and others whose vision and generosity created the palm-lined drive we all enjoy today and to the GW staff who keep it thriving.

*Some palm varieties can be hard to distinguish – if you see anything that needs correcting let me know at [cruzancoast@gmail.com](mailto:cruzancoast@gmail.com) (<mailto:cruzancoast@gmail.com>).*

### 1. Travelers Palm



Origin: Madagascar

Names: *Ravenala Madagascariensis*, Traveler's Tree, Traveler's Palm

Max Height: 50 feet

Two young Traveler's Palms flank the main entrance. Over time the leaf structure you see today will be elevated on a trunk of up to 50 feet. Technically this is a different species but is commonly known as a palm. Each leaf and stem serve as a gutter system, routing rainwater from the leaf down the hollow stem into a "cistern" at the stem base. It is called the Traveler's Palm because people could cut into the stem bases to find drinking water as they travelled across the landscape.

## 2. Royal Palm



Origin: Caribbean and Florida

Names: Roystonea Regia, Cuban Royal Palm, Florida Royal Palm

Max Height: 90 feet

Lining the first section of the drive are stately Royal Palms, easily identifiable by their tall whitish trunks, bright green leaf bases, and long arching fronds. These palms also preside over the palm-lined drives at the Buccaneer Hotel and St. George Botanical Garden. This is the national tree of Cuba and where it has a religious role both in Santería and Christianity, where it is used in Palm Sunday observances. There are also a few Royal Palms on the drive between the guard shack and the office.

## 3. Coconut Palm



Origin: Indian subcontinent and Island Southeast Asia

Names: Cocos Nucifera, Coconut Palm

Max Height: 80 feet

The next section of the drive is populated by Coconut Palms, a species originally from southeast Asia but now native throughout the tropics. It is also probably one of the most ancient plants on the planet and has been cultivated for over 3000 years. Known as the “tree of life,” this is the only species that produces coconuts, up to 75 per year. The large leaves can reach 20 feet in length. They can be identified by their tall often arching trunks, long straight fronds, and of course, the coconuts! Coconut Palms are present throughout the property, including around the pool and on the beach.

#### 4. Christmas Palm







Origin: Philippines

Names: Adonidia Merrillii, Christmas Palm, Manila palm

Max Height: 20 feet

The last section of the entrance drive is flanked by rows of Manila Palms, also known as the Christmas Palm because the fruits can be bright red in the winter. While the bright green leaf base and curving leaves are similar to those of the larger Royal palm, this is a completely different species that has a much narrower trunk that tops out at 20 feet. Often grown in pairs, Christmas Palms are popular due to their graceful curving leaves and are present around many Gentle Winds buildings.

*In palm trees, the trunks do not get much wider than the trunk bases even as the palm keeps growing taller and taller from the leaf area. Palms are like a tall stack of dinner plates that just keeps adding more plates at the top.*

## 5. Mexican Fan Palm (Skyduster)



Origin: Northwestern Mexico

Names: Washingtonia Robusta, Mexican Fan Palm, Skyduster

Max Height: 80 feet

When you arrive at the guard house, you'll see a Mexican Fan Palm behind it and another tall one to your right beside the D building. Probably one of the fastest growing palms in the world, this is the Skyduster, towering over Gentle Winds and other locations on St. Croix like The Reef. This palm is an icon of Southern California you may recognize from movies and TV set in L.A. You can identify the Mex-

ican Fan Palm by its long flower structures and old leaves that hang below the top. You'll find more Mexican Fan Palms in a row on the berm behind the basketball court as well as around many of the condo buildings.

*A key identifier of palms is the shape of the frond: feather-shaped (pinnate) like the Royal, Christmas, Coconut, and Date Palms, or hand-shaped (palmate) like Fan Palms, Sabal, and Tyre palms.*

## 6. Pygmy Date Palm



Origin: Vietnam, Laos, and Southern China

Names: Phoenix Roebelenii, Pygmy Date Palm, Miniature Date Palm

Max Height: 9 feet

Continue down the drive where you'll find Pygmy Date Palms in front of the A building; they are also planted around many other spots at Gentle Winds. Don't look here for a snack as unfortunately the one species of date palm that produces edible fruit is not present here. This species can be identified by short stature, knobby trunk, sharp spines on the stems, and matted fiber below the leaves.

## 7. Fiji Fan Palm





Origin: Fiji and Tonga islands

Names: Pritchardia Pacifica, Fiji Fan Palm

Max Height: 50 feet

Continue down the drive to the C building , passing a row of Christmas Palms in front of the B building. On the landside of the C building, towards the right side, you'll find a set of Fiji Fan Palms growing from down at the base of the building. They are also present on the land side of the I building. In Fiji the leaves of Fiji Fan Palm were traditionally used as fans that were only used by the chiefs. The Fiji Fan Palm can be identified by the stiff flat fan-shaped leaves and the yellowish flowers and fruit that stick up like popsicles among the stems.

### **Bonus Palm – Canary Island Date Palm**

As you pass the L building, look up to the National Park hilltop to the right. There is large Canary Island Date Palm at the top of the drive.





### 8. Blue Latan Palm



Origin: Mauritius islands  
Names: *Lantania Loddigesii*, Blue Latan Palm  
Max Height: 30 feet

Continue on to the right land side of the K building, where you will find a large, striking palm known as the Blue Latan Palm, the only one at Gentle Winds. This palm has a knobby stem and large, blue, cactus-like leaves. The Blue Latan Palm is endangered in its native habitat of Mauritius.

### 9. Tyre Palm







Origin: USVI and Puerto Rico

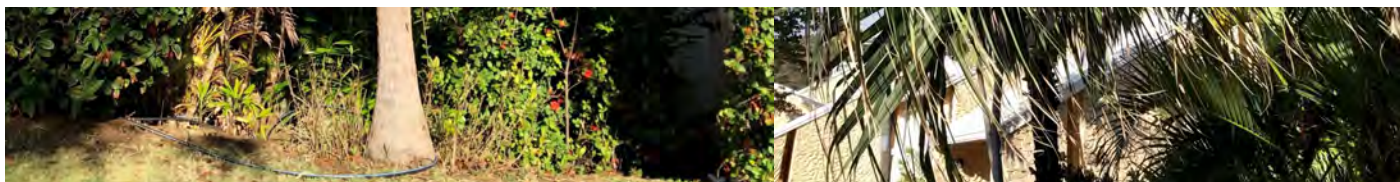
Names: *Coccothrinax Alta*, Tyre Palm, Puerto Rican Thatch Palm, Silver Thatch Palm

Max Height: 25 feet

On the left side of the Blue Latan Palm, down at the base of the K building, grows a USVI native—the Tyre Palm. This is the only Tyre Palm at Gentle Winds and can be identified by the relatively slender trunk, palm-shaped leaves, and burlap-like fibers around the leaf bases. Also known as a Puerto Rican Thatch Palm, it was used in traditional basketry, fish traps, brooms and roof thatching.

## 10. Chinese Fan Palm





Origin: China, Japan, and Taiwan

Names: *Livistona Chinensis*, Chinese Fan Palm, Fountain Palm

Max Height: 35 feet

To the right of the Blue Latan Palm is the only Chinese Fan Palm at Gentle Winds. It is also known as the Fountain Palm due to the way the fronds arch up and spill down like water from a fountain. This is slow-growing palm popular as an ornamental plant and is reported as naturalized in many parts of the tropics around the world including Puerto Rico.

## 11. Senegal Date Palm



Origin: Tropical Africa, Madagascar, and the Arabian Peninsula

Names: *Phoenix Reclinata*, Senegal Date Palm, African Date Palm

Max Height: 30 feet

On the right end of the K building sits a multi-stemmed Senegal Date Palm, the only specimen at Gentle Winds. This palm grows in clusters of up to fifty curving trunks and is identified by long sharp spines on the stems of the feathery leaves.

## 12. Butterfly Palm



Origin: Madagascar

Names: *Dypsis Lutescens*, Golden Cane Palm, Areca Palm, Butterfly Palm

Max Height: 20 feet

Continue to the J building. On the left and right sides of the J building you'll find clusters of Butterfly Palms. This palm has a bright green leaf base like the Christmas Palm, but they grown in clusters of much narrower trunks. The raised leaf scar rings make the trunks resemble cane or bamboo plants. This palm is naturalized across the Caribbean and is a popular plant for privacy screening. The Butterfly Palm is located around many of the Gentle Winds condo buildings and by the office.

### 13. Sago Palm





Origin: Southern islands of Japan

Names: *Cycas Revoluta*, Sago Palm, King Sago

Max Height: 20 feet

Follow the path on the right side of the J building, turning left towards the pool. Just past the Butterfly palms you'll find a Sago Palm on the right side of the J building. Not technically a palm, this tree grows in clusters and has leaves that resemble date palms. The plant is very slow-growing and requires about 50–100 years to achieve maximum height of 20 feet.

#### 14. Foxtail Palm



Origin: Australia

Names: *Wodyetia Bifurcate*, Foxtail Palm

Max Height: 30 feet

Walk along the ocean side of the J building to the middle of the K building to find Gentle Wind's only Foxtail palm. This palm resembles the Royal Palm, but has a narrower trunk and fronds with leaflets around all sides, resembling foxtails. Most of the world was unaware of the existence of this palm until 1978, when an Aboriginal man brought it to botanists' and the world's attention. It is native to the Cape Melville National Park in Queensland, Australia. After it became known to the world, the Foxtail Palm's seeds were so highly sought after that a thriving black market trade formed in the 1980s, with the Australian government banning exports to prevent decimation of the wild population. The species propagates readily in cultivation which ultimately reduced the pressure on the wild population.

## 15. Puerto Rico Palmetto



Origin: USVI, Puerto Rico, BVI and Hispaniola

Names: Sabal Causiarum, Puerto Rico Palmetto, Puerto Rican Hat Palm

Max Height: 33 feet

From the K building make your way to the Gentle Winds Great Room/Office area. On your way you'll find a few new plantings of young pygmy date, sago, and other palms on the ocean side of the condo buildings.

In between the Office and the Great Room buildings stand two Puerto Rico Palmetto, a native to the USVI. Also known as the Puerto Rican Hat Palm, its leaves are used to make straw hats. It can be identified by a large trunk, and arching, palm-shaped leaves.

*The native Puerto Rico Palmetto concludes the Gentle Winds Palm Tree tour. Grab a drink at the beach shack to celebrate your journey!*

**Sources:**

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Blog at WordPress.com.