**Tree Transplanting**

**Palm Tree Transplanting and Planting**

**Size of palms to plant**

- Large palms are easier to planted or transplanted.
- Containerized palms, with little or no root disturbance, size is dependent on the capacity of the equipment to move and handle large, heavy specimens safely.

For palms transplanted from one site to another or field-grown plants dug in a nursery, it is important to select specimens with some visible trunk or stem because they are more tolerant of root disturbance and will reestablish more quickly and successfully.

Do not transplant the following species with visible above-ground trunks:

- *Sabal* (palmetto palm)
- *Bismarckia* (Bismark palm)
- *Latania* (Latan palm)

**When to plant/transplant**

- Root growth is essential for rapid and successful establishment. Root growth is highest during warmer months.
- Transplant palms in the beginning of the warm season to ensure several months of high temperatures for adequate root growth.
- Container palms can be planted safely year round.
- Size of root ball
  - Most palm species with root balls extending out 12 inches from the trunk and 12 to 24 inches deep are adequate for transplanting.
  - A deeper root ball will help to stabilize taller specimens.
  - The larger the root ball the more successful and quick is establishment.
  - Palms with excessively large root balls are more difficult and expensive to move due to their size and weight.
  - The hole left after a palm with a large root ball has been dug usually must be filled, requiring more labor and expense, and perhaps even additional soil.

**Leaf removal/Tie up**

- Consult Cal Poly Landscape Representative to determine if this is necessary. The practice has little value when transplanting in cooler, more humid coastal areas.
- To protect the palm and for ease of handling, tie up leaves during digging, transporting, and replanting. In appropriate situations, untie leaves once the palm is replanted.
Transport

- Palm specimens must be well supported and protected during moving and handling to prevent injury to the apical bud or meristem and trunk.
- Protect palm bark; wounds and injuries are permanent and potential sites for disease and insect entry.
- Some species, like Archontophoenix cunninghamiana (king palm), are sensitive to handling. They and other slender trunked palms with heavy crowns should have a wooden splints attached along the trunk and extending into the leaves to prevent the weight of the crown from damaging the apical bud.
- Tie stems together of the multi-trunked species for additional protection.
- Use nylon and/or burlap slings and ties to support and grasp palms to prevent injury to the trunk when moving and handling with heavy equipment.
- Stack or shingle palms securely on the vehicle, either standing them up at an angle from the wind or laying them down with the root balls forward and the crowns at the rear.
- Cover root balls and crowns with shade cloth or other protective material during transport to prevent wind and sun damage and excessive drying.

Planting

- Backfill with the same unamended soil excavated from the hole.
- To support the stability of larger palms, consider backfilling with washed builder’s sand to pack more easily and uniformly.
- There is no benefit to amending the backfill with organic matter. Use organic matter as mulch several inches deep and several feet out from the palm’s base. Tamp out air pockets.
- If stabilization is required for large palms:
  - Use 2 x 4 or 4 x 4 wooden bracing attached against one-foot lengths of 2 x 4 vertically strapped or banded around the trunk.
  - Protect the trunk with nylon, burlap, or other suitable material where the one foot lengths of 2 x 4 are secured.
  - Do not nail into the trunk; nailing will cause permanent wounds, and disease and insect entry sites.
  - Palms may also be secured with guy wires or cable instead of wooden bracing.
  - Do not stabilize palms by planting them deeper in the hole; although some palms survive deep planting, most do not.
- Construct an irrigation berm four to six inches around the root ball and hole.
- Provide a two- to three-inch layer of mulch around the base of the palm to encourage new root growth, conserve moisture, and suppress weeds.
- Irrigate deeply and thoroughly.

Post-planting care

- Schedule irrigations based on need, not a clock or calendar.
- Irrigate sensibly, keeping the root ball and backfill evenly moist but not saturated.
- Keep turf grass and weeds away from the trunk base.
- Maintain a regular and complete fertilizer program once the palm is fully established.