

GROWING *Chambeyronia macrocarpa* IN PALM BEACH COUNTY

Submitted by Charlie Beck

Chambeyronia macrocarpa is a solitary palm native to New Caledonia. It has widespread distribution throughout the island growing in many soil types. It grows in moist forests from sea level to an elevation of 3,000 feet. Stems are emergent and grow to 60 feet tall in habitat.

In Florida, *C. macrocarpa* is a medium size palm. Stems measure 5 to 7 inches in diameter at waist level and fronds grow 7 to 9 feet long. The leaflets are very distinctive. They typically are flat, leathery and measure 4 inches wide and up to 3 feet long. This palm usually holds only 7 to 9 fronds so it does not cast dense shade.

C. macrocarpa is best known for its bright red emergent fronds. I know of no other emergent frond which rivals *C. macrocarpa* in beauty. Beware, there is a variety which pushes green emergent fronds. Be sure to verify frond color before purchasing this palm.



Dean Ouer sees this specimen when he looks out his kitchen window in Hawaii. (See more images at www.palmpedia.net)
(Photo by Dean Ouer)

There are several varieties of this palm which have different crown shaft colors. The standard color is a deep emerald green. The “hookeri” form has a yellow crownshaft. The “watermelon” form has a deep green color with yellow streaks or dots but new fronds typically emerge green, not red. The *houailou* (way-loo) variety has a yellow crownshaft, red emergent leaves and a distinctive leaf shape. The fronds are recurved like a *Carpenteria* and the leaflets are rolled – not flat. This variety is a collector’s item and has been hard to find. Juvenile specimens resemble coconuts. I have found this variety grows slower than the others.

All of our *Chambeyronias* weathered the 2004-2005 hurricanes unscathed. They have never shown cold sensitivities or minor nutritional deficiencies. I have planted specimens in sun and shade with equally good results. The crown of fronds with its wide leathery leaflets look distinctively tropical and the red emergent fronds will stop you in your tracks. I encourage all Palm Beach enthusiasts to consider planting this well-adapted palm.



Chambeyronia macrocarpa (Photos by Charlie Beck)



15 year old "watermelon" form specimens measuring 12 feet to bottom of crownshaft



15 year old "hookeri" form



Crownshaft—"watermelon" form



Typical leaf detail



"houailou" form