

Phoenix reclinata

[Synonyms : *Phoenix comorensis*, *Phoenix leonensis*, *Phoenix paludosa*, *Phoenix pumila*, *Phoenix reclinata* var. *comorensis*, *Phoenix reclinata* var. *leonensis*, *Phoenix reclinata* var. *madagascariensis*, *Phoenix spinosa*]

SENEGAL DATE PALM is an evergreen clustering palm. Native from tropical north-eastern sub-Saharan Africa to southern Africa it has long and slender arching fronds.

It is also known as African wild date, *Ayede* (Ewe), Cluster date palm, Dwarf date palm, *Ekikindu* (Ugandan), *Ekingol* (Ugandan), *Emusogot* (Ugandan), *Enkinu* (Ugandan), *LiSundu* (Swazi), *Lukindu* (Ugandan), *Lusansa* (Ugandan), *Makendu* (Ugandan), *Mujiti* (Ugandan), *Mukindu* (Kikuyu, Ugandan), Mukindu palm, *Nkeresia* (Twi), *Nkyeresia* (Fanti), *Nyede* (Ewe), *Otit* (Ugandan), Phoenix palm, Reclinata date palm, Reclining date palm, Senegal date, *Tit* (Ugandan), Wild date palm, and *Wildedadelbloom* (Afrikaans).

The leaf stems' spines congregating especially near to the trunk are very strong and sharp. The male flower sprays produce dust clouds of pollen. The small date-like, sweet-tasting brownish-black fruit are mainly stone and some authorities suggest the edible flesh is not especially palatable.

Some states in the United States have introduced regulations with regard to this palm's growth. In Arizona and Florida it is declared to be invasive while Hawaii only permits its cultivation under regulation.

Reclinata is derived from Latin *reclino* (to bend back) meaning 'bent backwards, drooping to the ground or leaning'.

Locally the leaves, fruit, sap and terminal bud (palm heart) have been harvested for food and drink. Just before flowering (when the sap increases its flow to the flower head) the liquid is tapped from the stem base and has been used to make wine or strong liquor. The terminal bud is prepared as a vegetable – but its removal from the palm will have signalled the tree's death knell. Some authorities note also that the roasted seeds have provided a coffee substitute.

New shoots and fruit are eaten by baboons. However the crested mangabey found in north-eastern Kenya near the Tana River (one of the white-eyelid monkey species of Africa) are in trouble. They depend upon this particular palm for food and its future is being threatened in the wild in that region today because it has been over-exploited.

Some authorities claim that this palm's multiple trunks are said to be more common in areas where the trees are heavily grazed by say giraffes and elephants. In fact this theory extends to the contention that some clumps of senegal date palm in their native African habitat could be thousands of years old as secondary stems will sprout whenever an existing stem or trunk dies from being over-grazed. It is said to be difficult to prove this however as unlike those of other trees palm trunks do not display annual growing rings that could aid botanists in determining an individual palm's age.

Leaf fibre has been used for basketry and for making rope and fine matting.

The roots yeield a brown dye.

This palm is cultivated as a hedging plant (apparently it throws up suckers), as well as an ornamental and container plant. It can be seen as a street tree in some urban areas in the extreme south of the United States.

