

Sabal palmetto

[Synonyms : *Chamaerops palmetto*, *Corypha palma*, *Corypha palmetto*, *Inodes palmetto*, *Inodes schwarzii*, *Sabal jamesiana*, *Sabal schwarzii*]

SABAL PALM is an evergreen palm. Native to the American tropics and the Bahamas it has small yellow flowers.

It is also known as Banks palmetto, Blue palmetto, Cabbage palm, Cabbage palmetto, Cabbage palmetto palm, Cabbage tree, *Chou palmiste* (French), Common blue palmetto, Common palmetto, Hearts of palm, Palmetto, *Palmetto-Palme* (German), Palm cabbage, Palm heart, Sabal (English, Slovak), Sabal palmetto, Sabal palmetto palm, and Thatch palm.

The flowers attract bees and they make a desirable honey.

Palmetto means ‘small palm’.

The common name Cabbage palm is a reasonable description of the cabbage-like (*Brassica oleracea* var. *capitata*) appearance of the terminal bud (viewed so often on many different species of palm trees as an especial delicacy). The appreciation of ‘delicacy’ is no doubt heightened for some gastronomes by a sense of limited availability as its removal from the top of many other palms passes a death sentence on the whole plant – whereas its removal from palms in this genus can usually be safe as the plant makes multiple shoots of which some can be sacrificed.

The berry-like glossy blackish fruit used to be eaten by local American Indian tribes (including the North American Seminole) Locally young buds still provide a salad vegetable today. Authorities have noted however that human beings are not the only ones to enjoy food from the sabal palm. Apparently birds have a field day when the berries are ripe.

The unopened leaves serve as religious symbols which are picked for Christian services on Palm Sunday.

Seminole North American Indians have used the opened leaves for thatching and more generally they have also provided material for weaving mats, hats and baskets. The tribe also used the plant to make arrows and fish poison – and the stems have been fashioned into stiff brushes.

Various medical problems were treated with it by North American Seminole Indians including headaches, fever and weight loss.

Sabal palm trunks have been used for building stockades, fences, and wharf piling. They have also provided material for laying ‘corduroy’ roads through swamps, as well as for making furniture such as tables.

This palm is a state emblem for both Florida and South Carolina in the United States and was adopted by the former in 1953 and the latter in 1939.