

**Development of the Book  
Selection and Management of Palms in  
a Mediterranean Climate**

**Elvenia J. Slosson Endowment Fund  
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I. Introduction

The last 25 years have seen a dramatic increase in the number and kinds of ornamental landscape palms available for residential, commercial, and public areas in California. Increasingly important components of landscapes in California, ornamental palms are emblematic signature plants of Mediterranean landscapes worldwide. Palms impart that so-sought-after exotic and dramatic theme to the landscape and offer installation and maintenance benefits and advantages that few other plants can provide. Homeowners, landscape architects and designers, and nursery growers and landscapers are demanding, growing, buying, installing and or maintaining significantly more palms than ever before. They are demanding practical, accurate, and timely information about the selection and management of landscape palms but, unfortunately, there is little research-based information on the subject.

## II. Goals/Objectives

We have completed the first year of a three-year project about selection and management of ornamental landscape palms in California and regions with a similar Mediterranean climate. The goals and objectives are to:

- compile all relevant popular and research-based literature and information (first two years);
- observe, assess, document, and photograph typical nursery and landscape practices and technology with palms in California (first two years);
- draft a manuscript of the results of our work for publication as a book targeted to homeowners and green industry professionals (third year).

## III. Accomplishments/Discussion

During the first year of the project we have:

- compiled a significant portion of the popular and research-based literature and information on ornamental palms in Mediterranean climates;
- made three trips (one each to central and northern California, San Joaquin Valley, and San Diego) to observe, assess, document, and photograph typical nursery and landscape practices and technology with palms (Fig. 1);
- met with several individuals in the landscape industry who have extensive experience working with palms to gain critical information on typical industry practices that will complement our research-based information;
- made three major presentations to the landscape industry and several presentations to home gardeners about selecting and managing palms in a Mediterranean climate;
- continued work on five research projects generating information about various aspects of the selection and management of palms in a Mediterranean climate (Fig. 2).

The expected outcome of this project is the creation of a manuscript and supporting documentation, such as photographs, that can be used in the publication of a book on how to select and manage ornamental landscape palms in California and similar Mediterranean climates. The book will contain timely, current, practical, research-based information that is presented in a style and format that would make it easily and readily accessible to all, regardless of their level of interest or expertise, from homeowner to research scientist, nursery grower, architect and designer, and landscaper. The information will enable homeowners and industry professionals to make informed and accurate decisions about the appropriate selection and management of ornamental landscape palms to maximize the functional and esthetic benefits and amenities these plants provide and to eliminate or minimize future problems.

The successful completion of this project and eventual publication of the book are directly relevant to the goals of the Slosson Endowment because they address a current and pressing issue in California ornamental horticulture by advancing and extending our knowledge of the principles and specific horticultural practices and technology concerning the selection and management of ornamental landscape palms to homeowners and nursery and landscape industry professionals.



Figure 1. Periodic removal of leaves and flower- and fruitstalks, as seen here in Lakewood, California, is the most labor intense maintenance practice of landscape palms yet little is known of the long-term effect of this practice on palm health (photo by D. R. Hodel).



Figure 2. Co-investigator James Downer performs porometer readings to measure leaf transpiration of *Washingtonia robusta* (Mexican fan palm) in a large-palm transplant study at the UC South Coast Research and Extension Center, Irvine (Photo by D. R. Hodel).