



Green Plants for Hawai'i's Tropical Landscapes

Melvin Wong

Department of Tropical Plant and Soil Sciences

In nature and in many gardens in subtropical and tropical regions, all-green plants are common. Most palms, aroids, ferns, bamboos, plants in the Marantaceae family, and ti plants are predominantly green when found in nature. While there has been a strong tendency for people to select for variegation and colors other than green for ornamental uses, green is the predominant color of plant foliage in the natural world.

The form of certain plants suggests a tropical environment, even if they are grown in subtropical locations, such as Hawai'i, or mild-temperate locations, and most of these plants are green. This publication lists and illustrates some plants desirable for providing a "tropical" appearance to landscapes.

The aroid family, for example, is a large family of plants that includes genera commonly used as ornamentals, such as *Philodendron*, *Monstera*, *Dieffenbachia*, *Aglaonema*, *Alocasia*, *Colocasia* (taro), *Xanthosoma*, *Homalomena*, *Synгонium*, *Caladium*, *Spathiphyllum*, *Anthurium*, and *Zantedeschia*, as well as some less commonly used genera such as *Typhonodorum*, *Schizocasia*, *Cryptocoryne*, *Orontium*, *Cyrtosperma*, *Amorphophallus*, *Hydrosme*, *Acoros*, *Lagenandra*, *Gonatopus*, *Arisaema*, *Arisarum*, and *Pista*. Many genera of the aroid family combine all-green color with shade tolerance. Examples are *Philodendron*, *Monstera*, *Dieffenbachia*, *Aglaonema*, *Xanthosoma*, *Alocasia*, *Colocasia*, *Synгонium*, and *Epipremnum* (pothos). Other genera of this family such as *Anthurium*, *Caladium*, *Spathiphyllum*, and *Zantedeschia* are famous for their colorful bracts or flowers. In Hawai'i, taros are mostly green and are eaten as poi or "table taro," like potato. In other South Pacific regions, *Alocasia* and *Xanthosoma* are also eaten. *Anthurium* and *Spathiphyllum* are also known for their green foliage.

The following list of plants reflects the author's preferences. To make an effective all-green tropical landscape you do not need many plants, but the key is to choose plants that go together well.



Lyon Arboretum, O'ahu

Weed risk categories

Concern has arisen in recent years about the invasiveness of plants used in landscaping. Efforts are ongoing to conduct “weed risk assessments” for plants. Generally, invasive plant species pose environmental risks and should be avoided. The Hawai'i Noxious Weed List, the Hawai'i Alien Species Coordinator list, and the Hawai'i-Pacific Weed Risk Assessment (HP-WRA) websites are sources of information about species invasiveness. Details about HP-HWRA assessment can be found at www.hear.org/wra.

In the list that follows, the current weed risk designation is indicated just before the plant scientific name. If there is no such indication, the plant has yet to be evaluated. The categories used are

L = Not currently recognized as invasive in Hawai'i, and not likely to have major ecological or economic impacts on other Pacific Islands based on the HP-WRA screening process.

H = High risk species that are either pests or likely to become pests.

E = “Evaluate”; some species have gone through an initial assessment, but not enough information is available yet to confirm a designation.

According to the website www.botany.hawaii.edu/faculty/daehler/wra, an “H” designation does not necessarily mean “do not plant.” Some judgement is required based on knowledge of the plant's invasivity threat. For example, planting a Macarthur palm on the grounds of a hotel in Waikīkī may not represent the same threat as planting one on the grounds of a residence or resort that is near an area to which the plant could be an environmental menace.

All-green tropical plants

Acanthus mollis (Bear's breech), p. 4

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Acrocomia herensis, p. 4

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Alocasia spp. (alocasia), p. 6

Anthurium hookeri, p. 7

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^L*Areca catechu* (betel nut palm)

Areca triandra, p. 8

Arenga pinnata (sugar palm), p. 8

Arenga undulatifolia, p. 8

^L*Artocarpus altilis* ‘Tahitian’ (Tahitian breadfruit), p. 9

Asterogyne martiana, p. 9

Attalea cohune (cohune palm), p. 8

Bambusa wamin (wamin bamboo)

Begonia nelumbiifolia (lily-pad), p. 10

Calathea libbyana, p. 10

Calathea pseudoveitchiana, p. 10

Calyptrogyne ghiesbreghtiana, p. 10

^E*Caryota mitis* (fishtail palm)

Caryota urens (wine palm), p. 11

Chamadorea amabilis

Chamadorea cataractorum (cascade palm), p. 11

Chamadorea elegans (parlour palm)

Chamadorea ernesti-augustii

Chamadorea geonomiformis

Chamadorea metallica

Chamadorea palmeriana

Chamadorea pumila

Chamadorea rigida

Chamadorea seifrizii (bamboo palm)

Chamadorea stenocarpa

Chamadorea sullivaniorum

Chamadorea tenella

Chamadorea tuerckheimii

Chamaerops humilis (European fan palm), p. 10

Clinostigma ponapensis

Clinostigma samoense, p. 12

^L*Cocos nucifera* (coconut palm), 12

^H*Coffea arabica* (coffee), p. 12

Cordyline bausei (bausei ti), p. 13

Cordyline braziliensis (Braziliansis ti), p. 13

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Corypha lecomtei, p. 14

Corypha umbraculifera ‘Talipot’, p. 15

Costus speciosus, p. 15

Costus vinosus, p. 15

Curcuma australaisica, p. 15

Cycas circinalis (queen sago), p. 16

^L*Cycas revoluta* (Japanese sago palm), p. 16

Dictyosperma album (princess palm), p. 16

^L*Dyopsis lutescens* (areca palm)



Mandai Orchid Garden, Singapore

^H*Elaeis guineensis* (African oil palm)

Elaeis oleafera, p. 16

Ensete ventricosae, (ensete banana), p. 17

Heliconia episcopalis

Heliconia nickerensis, p. 17

Howea fosteriana (kentia palm)

^L*Hyophorbe lagenicaulis* (bottle palm), p. 17

Johannesteijsmannia altifrons (litter-collecting palm), p. 18

Laccospadix australasicus (Atherton palm), p. 18

Licuala grandis, p. 18

Licuala ramsayi

Licuala spinosa

^E*Livistonia chinensis* (Chinese fan palm), p. 18

^L*Livistonia rotundifolia* (footstool palm), p. 19

Lodoicea maldivica (coco-de-mer), p. 19

Ludovia lancifolia, p. 19

Monstera spp., p. 19

Neomarica gracilis (walking iris), p. 21

Osmuxlon lineare (Miyagos bush), p. 21

Pelagodoxa henryana (vahane), p. 21

Philodendron bipinnatifidum, (selloum philodendron), p. 21

Philodendron cannifolium

Philodendron giganteum (giant philodendron)

Philodendron speciosum (imperial philodendron)

Philodendron ‘Zanadu’, p. 20

Piper magnificum (lacquerd pepper tree), p. 22

Phoenix canariensis (Canary Island date palm), p. 24

Phoenix dactylifera (date palm), p. 23

Phoenix reclinata (Senegal date palm)

^L*Phoenix roebelenii* (dwarf date palm), p. 23

Phoenix rupicola (cliff date palm), 20

Pigafetta filaris (pigafetta palm)

Pinanga coronata, p. 22

Prestoea tobagonis, p. 22

^L*Pritchardia pacifica* (Fiji fan palm), p. 22

^L*Pritchardia thurstonii* (Masai palm), p. 25

^E*Ptychosperma elegans* (solitaire palm), p. 25

^H*Ptychosperma macarthurii* (Macarthur palm), p. 26

^L*Ravenala madagascariensis* (traveler’s palm)

^L*Rhapis excelsa* (lady palm), p. 24

Rhopalostylis baueri (Norfolk palm)

Rhopalostylis sapida (Nikau palm), p. 25

^L*Roystonea oleracea* (Carribbean royal palm), p. 25

^L*Roystonea regia* (Cuban royal palm), p. 26

Sabal palmetto (palmetto palm), p. 27

Sabal parviflora (Cuban palmetto palm)

^L*Schizostachyum glaucifolium* (‘ohe kahiko bamboo)

Spathiphyllum ‘Sensation’, p. 27

^L*Strelitzia nicolai* (bird of paradise tree)

Syagrus romanzoffiana (queen palm), p. 28

Synechanthus fibrosus, p. 27

Tacca chantrieri (bat flower plant), p. 27

Tillandsia grandis

^L*Veitchia joannis* (Niusawa palm), p. 29

^L*Veitchia merrillii* (Manila palm), p. 29

^L*Veitchia montgomeryana*

Vriesea hieroglyphia (king of the bromeliads)

Wallichia disticha (Wallich palm)

^H*Washingtonia robusta* (Mexican fan palm), p. 28

^L*Wodyetia bifurcata* (foxtail palm), p. 30

Xanthosoma brasiliense (Tahitian taro), p. 29

^L*Zamia furfuracea* (cardboard palm), p. 30



Acanthus mollis (Bear's breech)



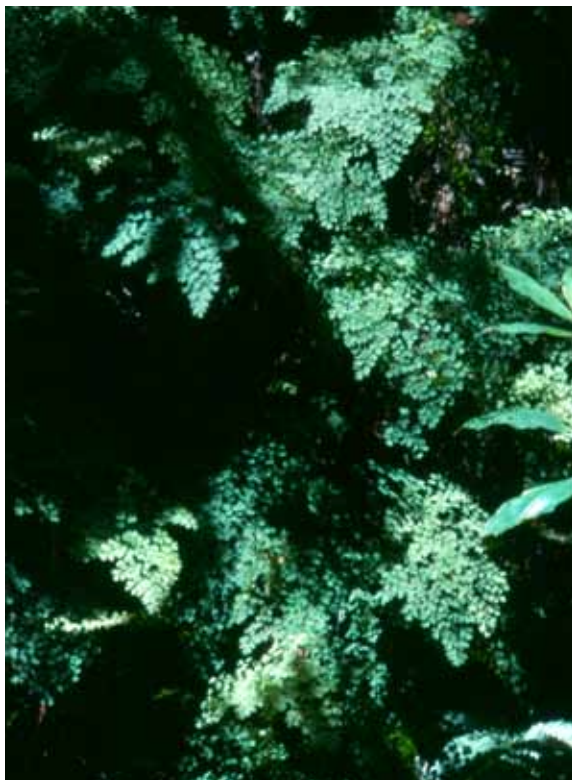
Acrocomia herensis



Acoelorrhaphe wrightii



Aglaonema 'Mariae'



Adiantum spp. (maiden hair fern)



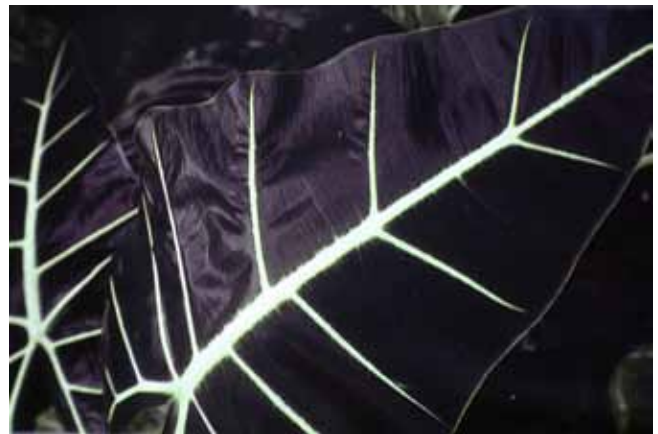
Alocasia cucullata (Chinese taro)



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Veitchia merrillii (Manila palm)



Landscaping at the Kahala Apartments, O'ahu, achieves a "tropical" effect using mostly palms.



***Wodyetia bifurcata* (foxtail palm)**



***Zamia furfuracea* (cardboard palm)**

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This view of Maunaluan Condominium, O'ahu, is dominated by traveler's palms.

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