

# Something is killing Florida's State Tree



Hillsborough County Extension Service says the Cabbage Palms throughout the county are turning yellow and from a new disease.

Hillsborough County, Florida - The Hillsborough County Extension Service says a year long investigation into the decline and death of cabbage palms in Hillsborough County confirms the presence of a new lethal disease. The Cabbage Palm is Florida's State Tree.

Removal and analysis of trunk corings have confirmed that the phytoplasma (disease) that causes Texas Phoenix palm decline is also causing the decline of the cabbage palms.

The phytoplasma is similar to, but genetically distinct from, the phytoplasma that causes lethal yellowing. The previously known palm hosts for this particular disease are Canary Island date palm, edible date palm, wild date palm, and queen palm.

The newly identified cabbage palm disease was first confirmed in Manatee County by observations and laboratory analysis two weeks ago.

The appearance of similar symptoms in the photographs documenting the decline in cabbage palms in Hillsborough County led to the laboratory testing of samples taken from EG Simmons County Park and the Brandon area.

To date, Texas Phoenix palm decline had been confirmed from date palm species from southern Sarasota County to Pinellas and northern Hillsborough Counties and eastward to Polk County (confirmed in Lakeland).

According to the Hillsborough County Extension Service the signs of the disease are the following.

- The first clue is the appearance of more dead lower leaves in the canopy than would be normal due solely to natural senescence or nutrient deficiencies.
- The second clue is death of the spear leaf, prior to death of all other leaves in the canopy.
- Eventually, the palm canopy collapses around the trunk as the bud decays.
- The leaves of infected cabbage palms typically appear to have a bronze or reddish-brown appearance.
- Later, these discolored leaves become more gray-brown in color.

Right now researchers are trying to figure out how the disease moves through the landscape.

*The Hillsborough County Extension Service & Tampa Bay's 10 News*