

Mexican fan palm (*Washingtonia robusta*) – a new casual record for Europe?

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While on holiday with my wife in southern Spain in May 2011, we visited the famous Maritime Museum, Torre del Oro, on the banks of the Guadalquivir River in the city of Seville. Outside the Museum is a roadside row of a few tall Mexican fan palms (*Washingtonia robusta*) (Fig. 1). Locally underneath these palms in the cracks of the pavement were established wild palm seedlings (Fig. 2).

This is possibly a new casual record of Mexican fan palm for the wild European flora. Since the publication of *Flora Europaea* vol. 5 (including the palms) (Tutin et al. 1980), there appears to be no overall update of this group for Europe. *Washingtonia*

filifera is mentioned in the flora (Tutin et al. 1980, p. 267) as a conspicuous and widely cultivated species in Europe – *W. robusta* isn't mentioned.

Mexican fan palm is native to north-western Mexico and Baja California, often growing near the sea, and has a wide tolerance level regarding temperature, from the cool temperate to the tropics (Jones 1995). It is often confused with *W. filifera* but grows taller, with a much thinner trunk flared widely at the base, and a compact crown of fronds (Jones 1995).

Mexican fan palm has recently been recorded as naturalising at three sites in Auckland and one in Napier, usually adjacent to adult cultivated palms (Martin 2009). Some of the wild seedlings were growing in similar habitats to the Seville seedlings, that is, "in cracks in asphalt and footpaths..." (Martin 2009).



Fig. 1. Tall Mexican fan palms outside the Maritime Museum, Seville, Spain. Photo: EKC, 13 May 2011.



Fig. 2. Seedling palms in the pavement in front of the Museum, Seville. Photo: EKC, 13 May 2011.

References

- Jones, D.L. 1995: *Palms throughout the world*. Reed Books Australia. 410p.
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