



Shopper ponders small Chilean wine palm at nursery in Santa Rosa, California. Planting after soil warms in spring ensures quick rooting, growth

PLANT COLLECTOR'S CORNER:

The Arnold Schwarzenegger of palm trees

If Arnold Schwarzenegger were a palm tree, he'd be a *Jubaea chilensis*. This vigorous behemoth, commonly called Chilean wine palm, reaches 50 to 60 feet tall and develops a thick trunk (the one on the tree at right is 4½ feet in diameter). Fronds on a mature tree may reach 12 feet long.

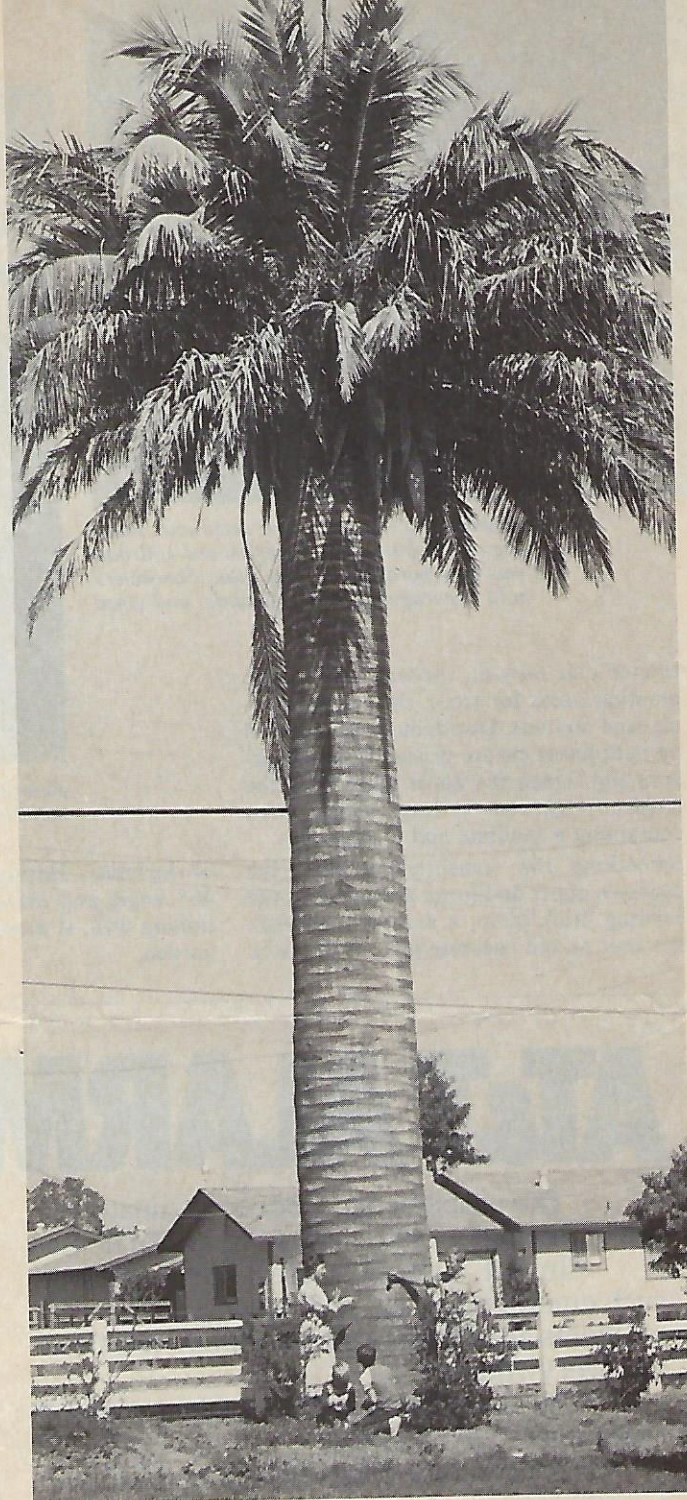
Chilean wine palm is little known outside its native South America. Yet the few old specimens found in northern California are proof of the plant's adaptability to dry summers as well as to occasional deep dips in temperature; able to weather cold of 20° and below, this is probably the hardiest of the feather-leaved palms. It didn't flinch at this year's freeze.

If you like big, bold, can't-miss-'em plants and there's room in your garden for this giant, you might try growing one. It'll give your grandchildren living proof of your gardening gusto.

Plant in a roomy spot with full sun and fast-draining soil. Although the palms seem to do well in poor, rocky soil in their native Chile, growers suggest getting young plants off to a good start in rich garden soil. Water during summer dry spells the first few years, while they're getting established; rootballs are small, so they won't need much water. In hottest, driest weather, soak twice a week around the base after sundown (to minimize evaporation). Feed lightly with complete fertilizer.

Chilean wine palms are hard to find. We know of two California nurseries that offer them by mail: Neon Palm Nursery, 1560 Sebastopol Rd., Santa Rosa 95407, (707) 578-7467; Exotica Rare Fruit Nursery, 2508-B E. Vista Way, Box 160, Vista 92083, (619) 724-9093. Write or call for prices, shipping costs.

If you have access to the fruits, you can try growing the palms from seed. They are best planted fresh and take six months (sometimes longer) to germinate. Remove the fleshy husk, then place the nut, half-covered, in a 1-gallon can of fresh potting mix. Keep the potted seed damp and in a cool, shady spot. □



Mighty specimen, planted in northern California in early 1900s, suffered no damage during long 10° to 12° cold snap in 1972

Fleshy yellow fruits drop in autumn for easy harvesting. Inside husks are marble-size edible nuts with strong coconut flavor

