



# Identifying Native Plants

Scientists often use dichotomous keys to identify plants. A dichotomous key identifies organisms based on the answers to a series of questions, with each question involving alternative choices. Here at Fairchild Tropical Garden you are the scientist and will use this key to identify native South Florida plants. Good luck!

To use this key, look at the two number 1s first. Decide which statement best matches your plant and continue on to the next number in the series. Don't get confused! If you have a question, simply ask.

- 1. This plant is a palm.....2
  - 2. Each leaf of the palm is palmate.....3
    - 3. Carefully feel the stalks that attach the leaf to the stem. They are toothed..... Saw Palmetto
  - 2. Each leaf of the palm is curved, or C-shaped.....4
    - 4. The leaves of this plant have hanging threads.....Sabal or Cabbage Palm
  
- 1. This plant is not a palm.....5
  - 5. This plant is a tree (has one main stem or trunk).....6
    - 6. The tree has simple leaves.....7
      - 7. Tree has deeply furrowed (cracked), grayish bark. There are usually plants growing on the branches of these trees.....Live Oak
    - 6. This tree has compound leaves.....8
      - 8. This tree has reddish peeling bark Gumbo Limbo
  - 5. This plant is a shrub (multiple stems, not tall).....9
    - 9. The leaves of this plant are shiny and deeply furrowed.....Wild Coffee

