

# Montgomery Botanical NEWS

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# New Palmetto Discovered!

## A remote and rare *Sabal*.

An unexpected find in palm science! A new palmetto species, *Sabal antillensis*, was published this year – the new species is only known to grow in the Dutch Caribbean, and has a striking appearance, with a swollen trunk (see front cover) and short leaf stalks.

The palmetto genus includes some of the best known and most widely planted palms. Florida's own state tree, *Sabal palmetto*, is a beloved and common feature of avenues, gardens, and wild landscapes. The new species *Sabal antillensis* has been known about for some time, but not officially designated until this April. Quoting from the species description: "The single native palm species on Curaçao and Bonaire did not receive much attention, or even a determination, for many decades." The first specimens are only from the late 1940s, and botanists only began to mention its distinctiveness in the 1970s.

A collaborative effort between Montgomery Botanical Center and the Carmabi Foundation (Curaçao) thoroughly studied the geography, morphology and anatomy of these palms, and found they deserve their own new name – chosen to honor the Dutch Antilles where they are found.



*Sabal antillensis* grows on windswept, rocky hillsides on the leeward side of Christoffelberg, often on exposed ridges. The leaflets appear to be adapted to this windy, dry habitat.

Montgomery is very grateful to Dr. Lin Lougheed for generously funding this exploratory plant research, and to the Carmabi Foundation (Curaçao), the Government of the Public Entity of Bonaire, and the USDA for permission to study and collect these important specimens. Reference: Griffith, M. P., J. de Freitas, M. Barros, and L. R. Noblick. 2017. *Sabal antillensis* (Arecaceae): a new palmetto species from the Leeward Antilles. PHYTOTAXA 303(1): 056–064.





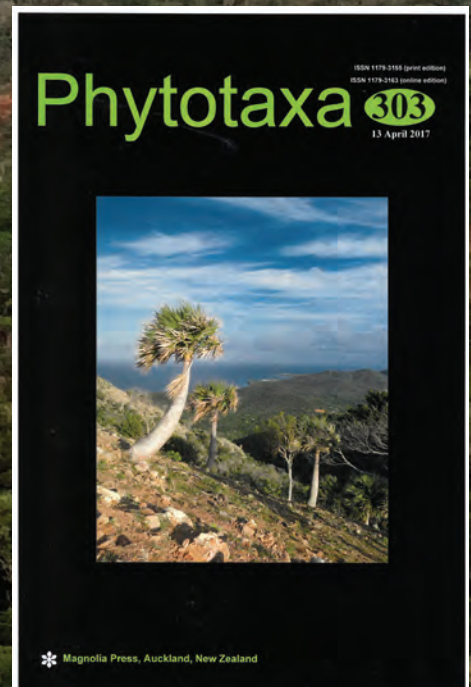
On Bonaire, sabalpalm grows on low elevation limestone terraces. The first botanist to study these palms, Ms. Winkleman, noted that the Bonaire palms tend to be taller than those on Curaçao. The palms have protected status on Bonaire, and the Echo Foundation successfully cultivates sabalpalm seeds locally.



A distinctive feature of *Sabal antillensis* is the short leaf stalk, which is always shorter than the leaf blade.



The majority of *Sabal antillensis* are protected within Christoffelpark; seeds, seedlings, and young plants are abundant there.



The species description, featured on the cover of PHYTOTAXA 303(1), is freely available on the PHYTOTAXA website.

**Background:** *Sabal antillensis* is found only on the islands of Bonaire and Curaçao, in the southern Caribbean, where it is locally known as “cabana” or “sabalpalm.” This photo shows the view from the west slope of Christoffelberg, the type locality of the species.