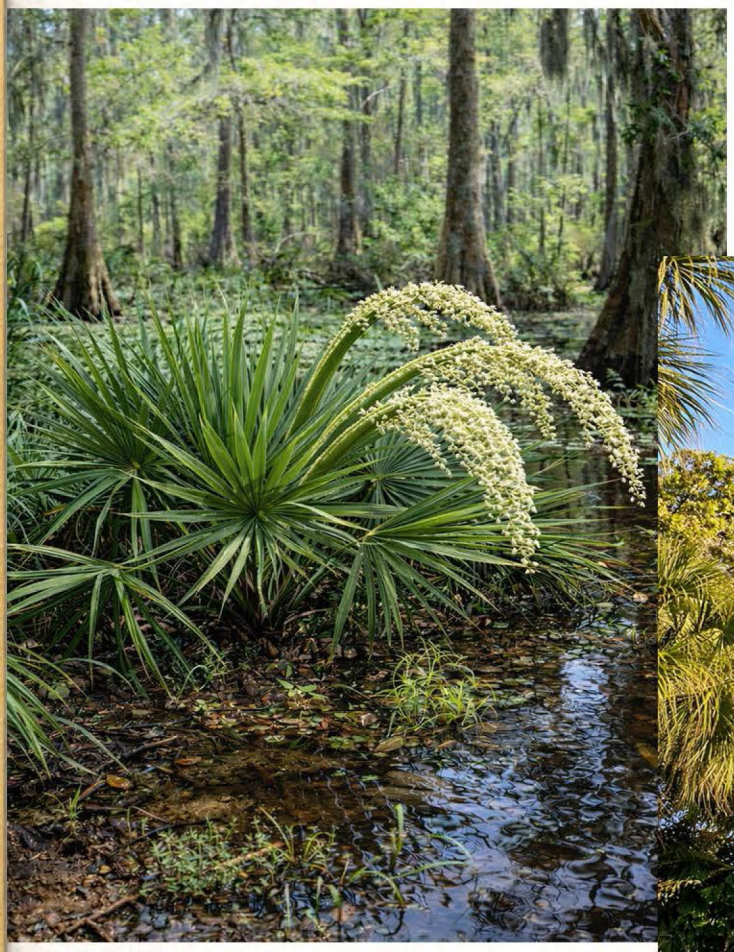
Sabal Palm Identification Field Guide



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Sabal Palm Identification Field Guide
Key Subterranean Sabal ID's

Primarily Subterrannean Stem to (Trunk) Height Under 2m (79 in)

1- Inflorescence equal to or shorter than Fronds

- 1a. yellow-green leaves, FL scrub habitat - **Sabal** *etonia*
- 1b. green leaves, Fruit 12-15mm (larger than minor), costa15-28cm, NE Mexico Dry scrub - **Sabal** *tamaulipensis*
- 1c. Inflorescences as long or longer than the green leaves - go to step 2

2. Inflorescence greater length than fronds
- 2a. Branched to 2 orders and extending greatly beyond fronds; fruits 0.6-1.0 cm (0.24-0.39 in) diameter, weak costapalmate, wet habitat - **Sabal** *minor*
- 2b. Branched to 3 orders; fruits 1.4-1.7 cm (0.55-0.67 in) diameter (Fruit larger than *etiona* diameter of 1.3cm), S. Florida - **Sabal** *miamiensis*

Sabal *minor* should be considered the default identification for subterrannean species unless clear diagnostic characteristics indicate otherwise

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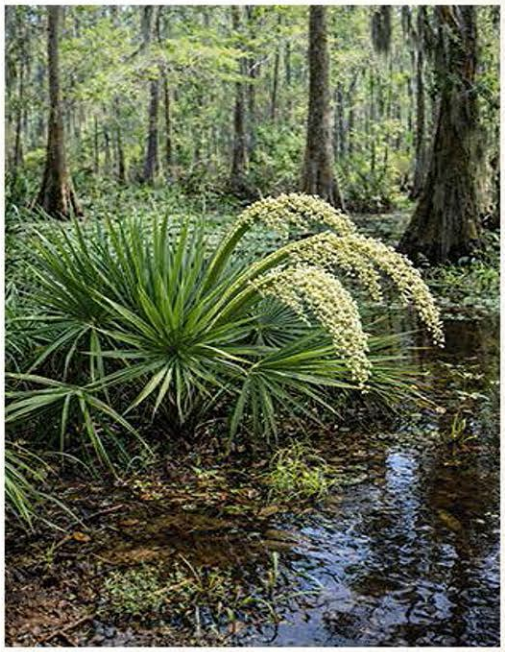
Key Subterranean Sabal ID's

Sabal *minor* - Tall arching inflorescence exceeding Gray-green fronds significantly with 2 orders of branching, fruits 6-10mm

Sabal *etonia* - Inflorescence Not exceeding Yellow-green fronds (minor is gray-green), fronds more strongly costapalmate than minor, found in dry florida scrub, minor is found in wet bottom areas.

Sabal *tamaulipensis* - NE Mexico palm found in dry scrub, *minor* is found in wet bottom areas., Fruit is 12-15mm vs 6-10mm minor, inflorescence does not exceed fronds, fruits appear bunched

Sabal *miamiensis* - Palm endemic to S. Florida, strong costapalmate frond, Fruit is 14-19mm vs 6-10mm minor, Inflorescence brancing 3 orders



S. *minor* Found in wet swampy areas

S. *tamaulipensis* recently described as a new species in 2025

Sabal Palm Identification Field Guide
Solitary, above-ground trunk

1. Aerial Stems (Trunks) 2-20 m (157-787 in) Tall

- 1a. Southeastern US (NC to FL) go to step 2
- 1b. Southern US (TX) to Central and northern South America - go to step 8

2. Trunk Diameter

- 2a. Trunks more than 35 cm (13.78 in) diameter - go to step 3
- 2b. Trunks 15-35 cm (5.91-13.78 in) diameter - go to step 5

3. Inflorescence Orientation

- 3a. Erect or ascending (especially early) - **Sabal** *maritima*
- 3b. Inflorescence not strongly pendant (Curaçao + Bonaire Only) - go to Step 5
- 3c. Arched or drooping - go to step 4

4. Fruit Shape and Size

- 4a. Round, 0.7-1.1 cm (0.28-0.43 in) diameter - **Sabal** *causiarum*
- 4b. Pear-shaped, 1.1-1.4 cm (0.43-0.55 in) diameter - **Sabal** *domingensis*

5. Geography

- 5a. endemic Bermuda, ID vs palmetto with it's larger fruit 13-18mm - **Sabal** *bermudana*
- 5b. Leeward Antilles (Curacao/Bonaire) - Go to Step 5A
- 5c. Cuba, Bahamas, SE US - go to step 6

5Aa. Bonaire endemic, trunk slender (<40 cm), taller (to ~7 m), leaf segments uniformly erect, trunk with raised/scarred texture - **Sabal** *lougheediana*

5Ab. Curaçao + Bonaire, Pachycaulous (thick, stout trunk >40 cm), shorter (to ~4–5 m), - **Sabal** *antillensis*

6. Inflorescence Arched or Erect

- 6a Erect or Asending, flowers dense (vs causiaurum) - **Sabal** *maritima*
- 6b Arched or drooping - go to step 7

Sabal Palm Identification Field Guide
Solitary, above-ground trunk

7. Leaflet Attachment
- 7a. Strongly costapalmate; all leaflets joined equally - **Sabal** *palmetto*
- 7b. Moderately costapalmate; leaflets joined in pairs or threes - **Sabal** *yapa*

8. Leaflet Joining Pattern
- 8a. All leaflets joined uniformly - go to step 9
- 8b. Leaflets joined in pairs for half their length - go to step 14

9. Region: Western & Southern Mexico
- 9a. From Sonora to Federal District - go to step 10
- 9b. NE/E Mexico to Oaxaca - go to step 12
- 9c. San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge - **Sabal** *brazoriensis*

10. Inflorescence Orientation
- 10a. Inflorescence drooping, shorter than fronds, Rio Balsas Basin - **Sabal** *pumos*
- 10b. Arching - go to step 11

11. Leaf and Branch Features
- 11a. Fronds even green color, inflorescence branches thin and curled, Sinaloa to Jalisco - **Sabal** *rosei*
- 11b. Glaucous fronds, inflorescence stiff, Sonora to Chihuahua - **Sabal** *uresana*

12. Fruit Shape and Size
- 12a. Fruits 1.5-2.0 cm (0.59-0.79 in) - go to step 13
- 12b. Pear-shaped fruits 1.1-1.4 cm (0.43-0.55 in) - **Sabal** *guatemalensis*

13. Leaflet Width
- 13a. Broadest leaflet 6-7 cm (2.36-2.76 in) - **Sabal** *gretheriae*
- 13b. Broadest leaflet 3.2-5.3 cm (1.26-2.09 in) - **Sabal** *mexicana*

14. Leaflets Joined in Groups
- 14a. Groups of leaflets joined for most of length and each group joined for 1/3 the length - **Sabal** *mauritiiformis*
- 14b. Groups of leaflets joined for 1/2 of length and each group joined for 1/6 the length - **Sabal** *yapa*

Citations and Credits

Primary Taxonomic References

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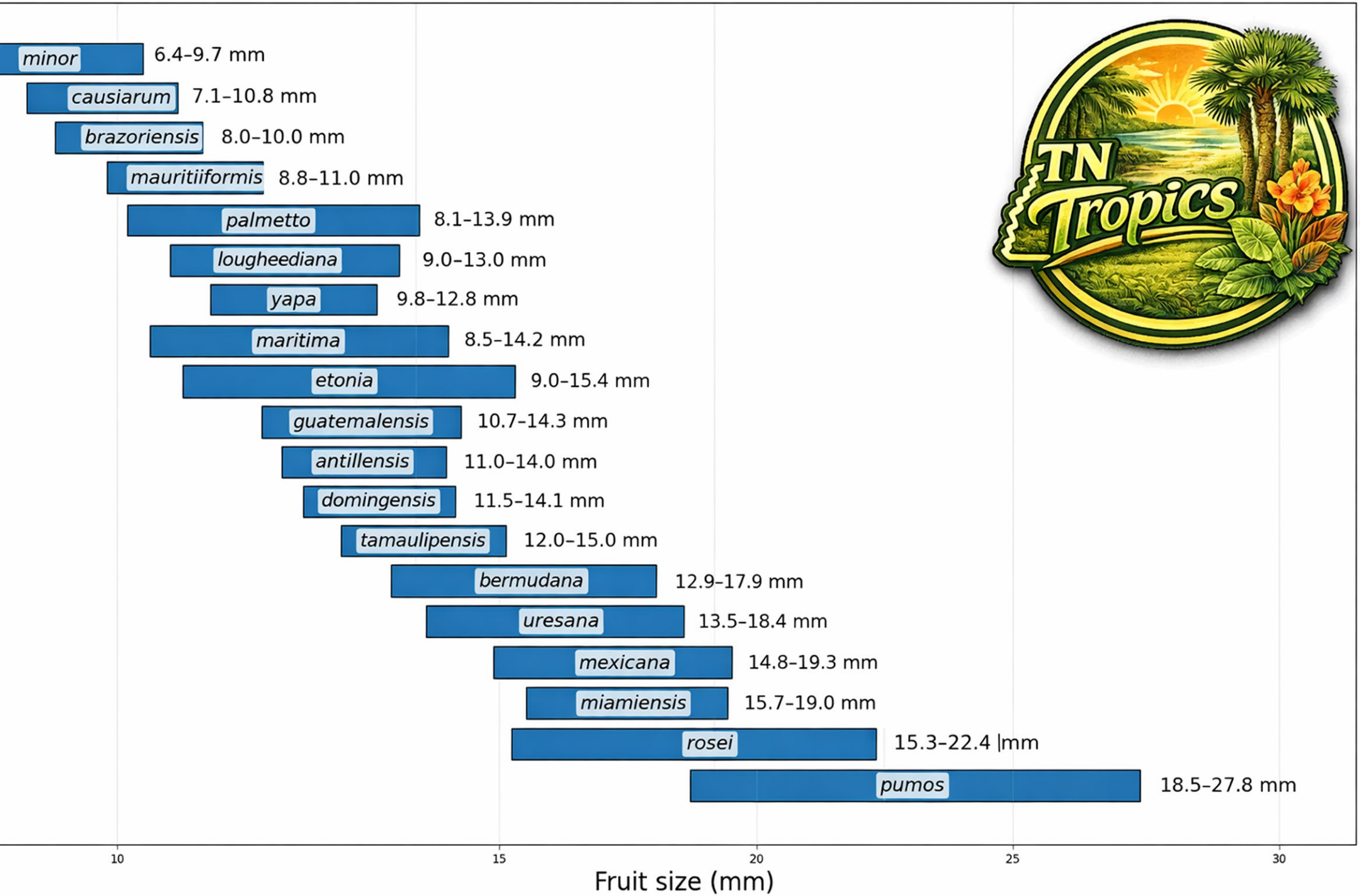
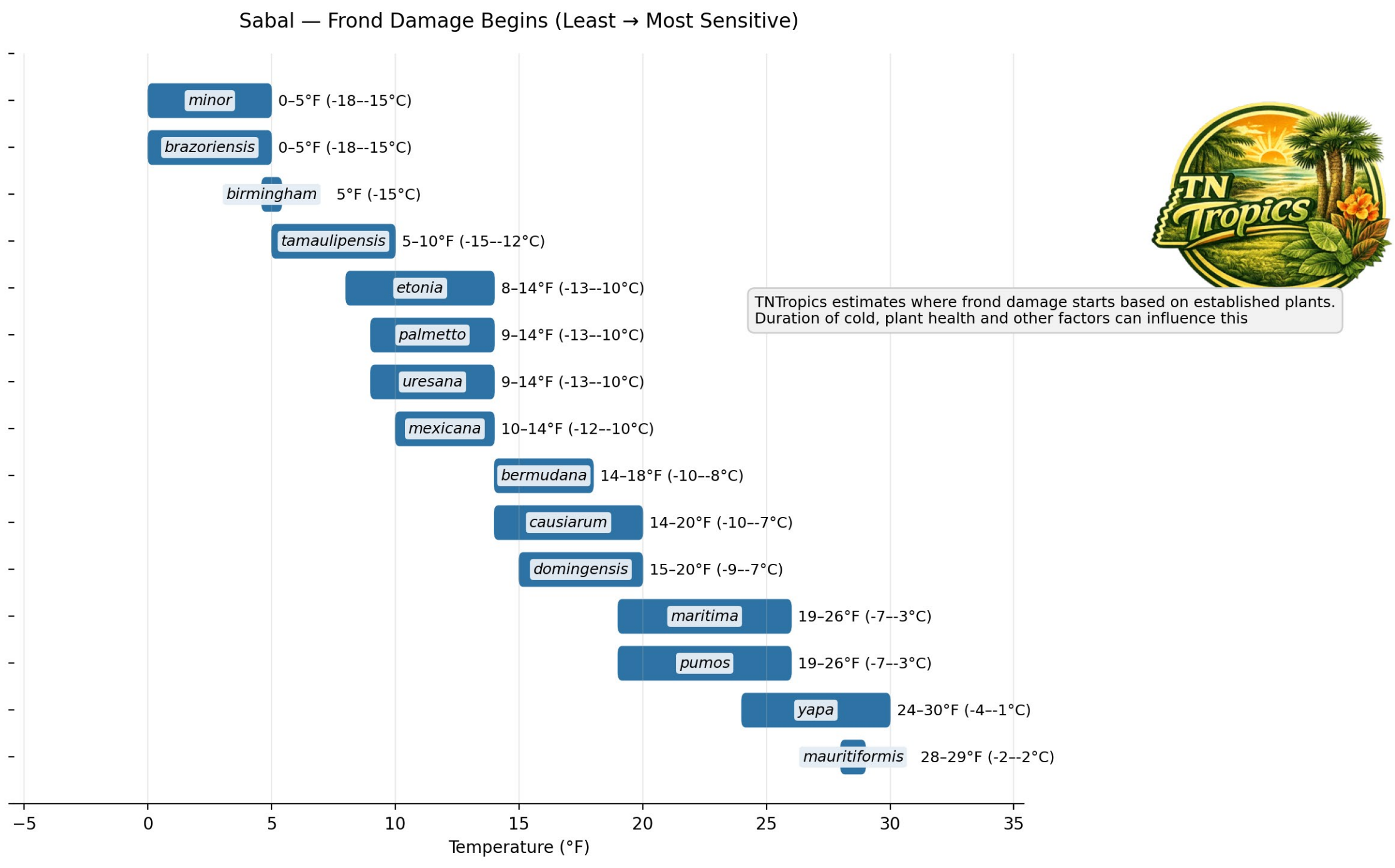
Guide Compilation, Interpretation & Layout

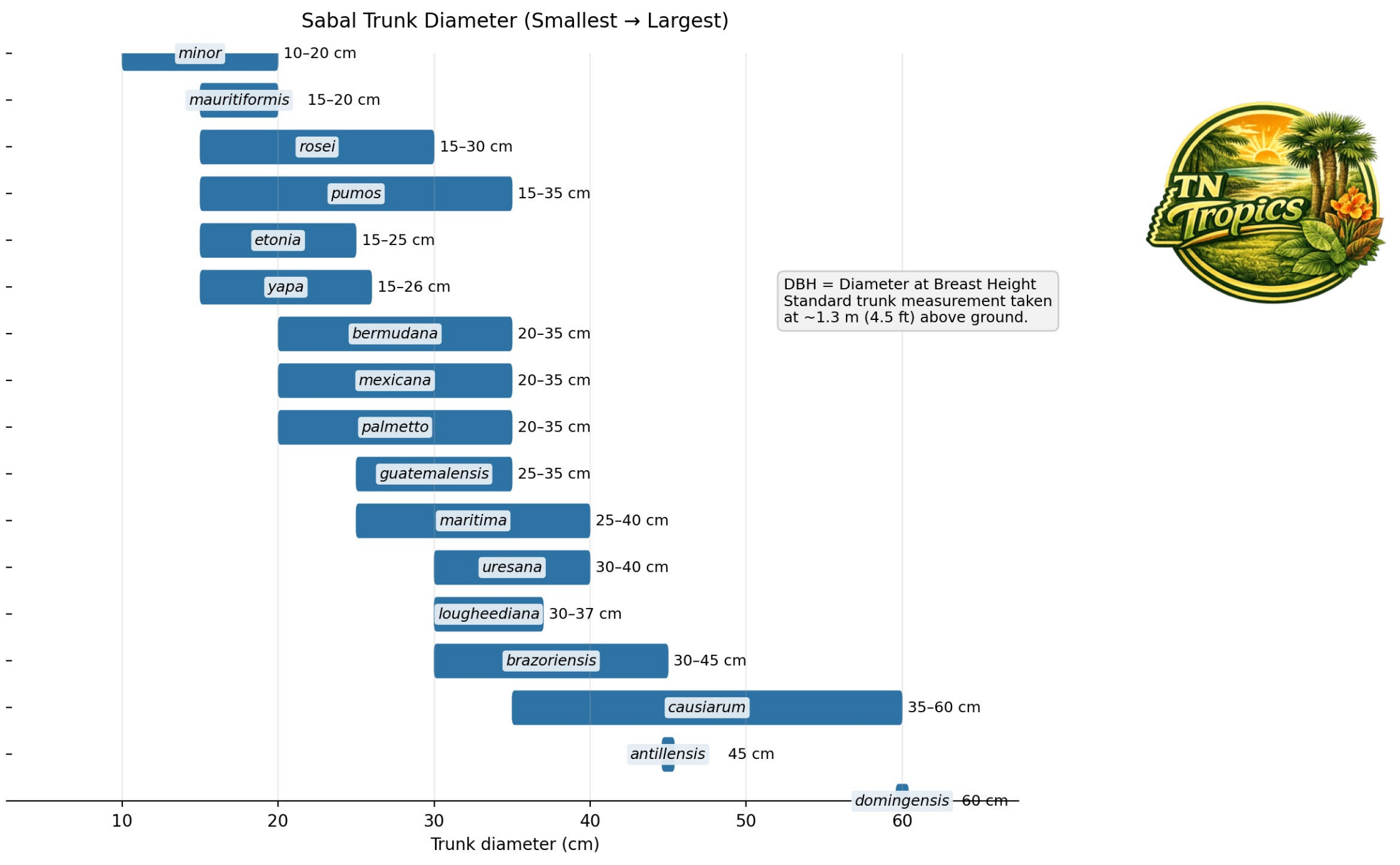
Compiled, synthesized, and field-adapted by TN Tropics, based on primary botanical literature and practical cultivation observations.

Portions of identification keys, range interpretations, and descriptive content have been reworked and simplified for field usability while maintaining alignment with the original taxonomic sources.

Palm Fruit Size Ranges (Smallest → Largest)




Sabal — Frond Damage Begins (Least → Most Sensitive)
minor
0–5°F (-18–-15°C)
brazoriensis
0–5°F (-18–-15°C)
birmingham
5°F (-15°C)
tamaulipensis
5–10°F (-15–-12°C)
etonia
8–14°F (-13–-10°C)
palmetto
9–14°F (-13–-10°C)
uresana
9–14°F (-13–-10°C)
mexicana
10–14°F (-12–-10°C)
bermudana
14–18°F (-10–-8°C)
causiarum
14–20°F (-10–-7°C)
domingensis
15–20°F (-9–-7°C)
maritima
19–26°F (-7–-3°C)
pumos
19–26°F (-7–-3°C)
yapa
24–30°F (-4–-1°C)
mauritiformis
28–29°F (-2–-2°C)
−5
0
5
10
15
20
25
30
35
Temperature (°F)
TN Tropics
TNTropics estimates where frond damage starts based on established plants.
Duration of cold, plant health and other factors can influence this


Sabal Trunk Diameter (Smallest → Largest)
minor
10–20 cm
mauritiformis
15–20 cm
rosei
15–30 cm
pumos
15–35 cm
etonia
15–25 cm
yapa
15–26 cm
bermudana
20–35 cm
mexicana
20–35 cm
palmetto
20–35 cm
guatemalensis
25–35 cm
maritima
25–40 cm
uresana
30–40 cm
lougheediana
30–37 cm
brazoriensis
30–45 cm
causiarum
35–60 cm
antillensis
45 cm
domingensis
60 cm
DBH = Diameter at Breast Height
Standard trunk measurement taken
at ~1.3 m (4.5 ft) above ground.
10
20
30
40
50
60
Trunk diameter (cm)