



## Coconut Palms from Seed

Coconuts fall from the tree when they are ripe. If the soil is loose and rainfall is sufficient, they often germinate and grow right where they land.

To select a coconut for germinating, choose a fallen nut in which you can hear water slosh when you shake it. Leave the husk on. Soak it in a pail of water for two or three days before planting.

To grow a coconut palm as a house plant, use a container at least 10 inches deep and large enough in diameter to hold the nut. Use a well drained potting soil mix. After soaking the nut, plant it with the pointed end down and the end that was attached to the tree upward. About a third of the nut should be above the soil level. Water it frequently, keeping the soil moist but not wet. As long as the soil drains well, it is difficult to give the germinating nut too much water. Keep the container in a warm location, preferably where the temperature never falls below 70°F and often is above 80°F. A container specimen should grow to be around 5 ft high and survive in the same container for about five years.

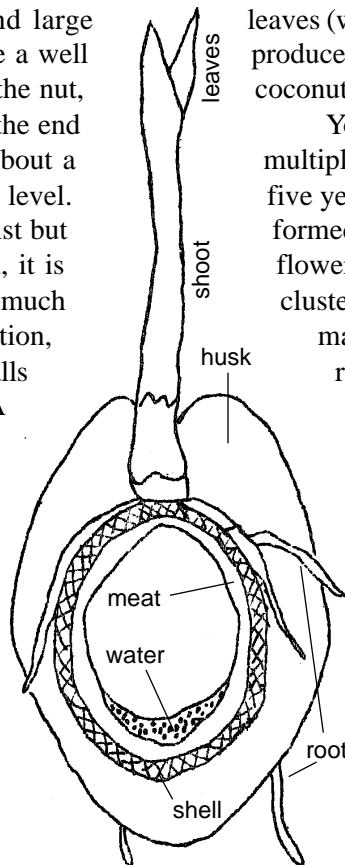
To grow the coconut in your yard, choose a site with well drained soil in partial shade. Place the nut on its side

in a shallow hole, burying only the lower third of the nut. Water it thoroughly twice a week.

Under ideal conditions, a coconut will germinate in three months, but otherwise it may take up to six months. At germination, the roots should push out through the husk, and the first shoot, looking like a sharp green spear, will emerge from the cavity at the end of the nut that was attached to the tree. The young leaves are “entire” leaves (without leaflets), but as the plant grows, it will produce the fronded (“pinnate”) leaves typical of the coconut palm.

Young coconut palms grow rapidly, and their multiple leaves will develop into a trunk in about five years. At that stage, flower clusters begin to be formed in the axil of each leaf. A few weeks after flowering, many immature fruits will drop from the cluster. Those that remain grow rapidly, reaching mature size in six months and becoming fully ripened in nine months. A good-sized mature nut in its husk weighs about 6 lb, and a healthy tree produces 50 nuts per year.

During the first year of growth, the coconut plant absorbs nutrients stored in the nut. Later, it responds to fertilizer as does any other plant.



\*Revised from “Coconut palm from seed” by Donald P. Watson, CTAHR Department of Horticulture; originally published as Hawaii Cooperative Extension Service Instant Information no. 5.