

Saw Palmetto (*Serenoa repens*)

Common Name: American dwarf palm tree, cabbage palm, sabal, serenoa.

Location: Saw Palmetto is a North American palm that grows wild mainly as isolated plants in the coastal regions of the Carolina and Gulf Coast states, and in saw palmetto thickets in Texas.

Description: Saw palmetto is a low-growing palm. The part of the plant used in medicine is the berry, which has a nutty vanilla-like flavor.

Properties: American physicians recognized the usefulness of saw palmetto in hormonal regulation as early as 1856.

Uses: Doctors prescribe teas of whole dried palmetto berries for breast enlargement, muscle building, and prostate problems. Saw palmetto has since gained widespread use by doctors and alternative health practitioners as a safe treatment for prostate disorders. It is also useful in treating wasting disorders by redirecting testosterone from stimulating the sex organs to stimulating muscle growth. It also acts as an anti-inflammatory agent. Benefits of saw palmetto for specific health conditions include treatment of benign prostatic hypertrophy (BPH) and prostate cancer; HIV/AIDS and menopause-related problems.

Doses: Saw palmetto is available as a tablet or saw palmetto liposome. For prostate conditions, it is often combined with pygeum.

Warnings: A few locally produced saw palmetto teas are still on the market today. These are not recommended for the indications listed here. Most commercial saw palmetto products, however, are made from concentrated extracts of the berries' naturally occurring, fat-soluble steroids. You should not use saw palmetto to treat urinary problems without first seeking medical evaluation. Women who are pregnant should not handle saw palmetto tablets. Women taking birth control pills or hormone replacement therapy should also avoid saw palmetto products.