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Horticulture Column

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Q. I need advice as to when and how I should transplant two *Copernicia baileyana* that need to be moved on my property. These plants were obtained seven years ago as 2-gallon container plants, they were planted in the ground four years ago, and the crowns now stand 1.5 m (5 ft) and 2.4 m (8 ft) tall. They are healthy plants growing in full sun. Judith Evans Parker, Miami, Florida.

A. Due to their slow growth rate and few roots, *Copernicia* species are not among the more tolerant of palms when it comes to transplanting. The ideal situation would be to wait and move these palms once visible trunk development begins. At this stage of growth, the root initiation zone has completed development and can produce new adventitious roots, which contributes to root system regeneration and speeds reestablishment following the move. Of course, trunk elongation in *Copernicia baileyana* generally occurs around 15–20 years of age. Your plants have a few years before developing the maximum diameter that precedes trunk elongation, and you have told me they need to be moved in the coming year.

How safe is it to transplant then? I asked Keith Lane for some help in answering this question.

Keith has broad experience transplanting palms for his business and has moved a number of smaller *Copernicia baileyana*. Depending on their health and site, he says young specimens like yours can be successfully transplanted with good care. Your robust plants in full sun should be in good condition for moving. You should begin the process in the Spring, once it is warm and the rainy season has commenced (April–May in South Florida). Transplanting at this time makes the best use of the growing season for recovery. For best results, the palms will need careful root-pruning and digging, and you should get experienced help for the transplanting. To minimize root system disturbance, Keith root-prunes in one-quarter increments, generally spaced across two months at this time of year. Watering is necessary throughout this time, in addition to any normal rainfall. Other practices to emphasize in this situation: when digging for the move, depending on the soil, wet it thoroughly first to keep the root ball together, or wrap the root ball with wire. Remove one-third of the older leaves to minimize water loss. During the first six months, water the palm in its new site to keep the root-ball evenly moist but not saturated.