

and the undersides of mature leaves, giving the plant a whitish appearance not seen in *Hemithrinax* and *Thrinax*.

Leucothrinax C.E. Lewis & Zona, **gen. nov.**

A *Thrinax* foliis glaucis, hastulis indumento albo sericeo caduco et floribus sessilibus vel subsessilibus difert – TYPE: *Leucothrinax morrisii* (H. Wendl.) C.E. Lewis & Zona

Solitary, unarmed, hermaphroditic palm to 11 m tall. Stems to 35 cm in diameter. Leaves palmate, induplicate. Petioles split basally with netlike fibers, elongate, usually longer than the leaf blade. Abaxial surfaces of petiole and leaf blade covered with whitish waxy scales. Hastula and inflorescence bracts covered with silky, white caducous scales. Inflorescences arching, exceeding the leaves. Flowers sessile or borne on very short pedicels less than 1 mm in length. Fruits white, globose. Endosperm homogeneous, embryo lateral.

Leucothrinax morrisii (H. Wendl.) C.E. Lewis & Zona, **comb. nov.** Basionym: *Thrinax morrisii* H. Wendl., Gard. Chron. 1891(1): 700. 1891.

Key to *Hemithrinax*, *Leucothrinax*, and *Thrinax*

Leaf cross veins inconspicuous, flowers ebracteolate; stamens sessile, inflexed in bud; anther connective broad *Hemithrinax*

Leaf cross veins conspicuous; flowers bracteolate; filament subulate; stamens erect in bud; anther connective slender

Leaves glaucous adaxially; adaxial hastula silky upon leaf emergence (but pubescence caducous); leaf blade composed entirely of palisade cells; flowers sessile or subsessile *Leucothrinax*

Leaves green adaxially; adaxial hastula glabrous or glabrescent upon emergence; leaf blade composed of either mesophyll cells or both mesophyll and palisade cells; flowers pedicellate *Thrinax*

Discussion

Leucothrinax morrisii is one of the most familiar cultivated palms of the Caribbean region and is also found in tropical gardens and conservatories worldwide. Its status as a distinct, monotypic genus had been, until now, unrecognized, as it shares many visible features with *Thrinax excelsa*, *T. parviflora* and *T. radiata*. Using molecular tools that were unavailable to earlier taxonomists, we were

able to show a clear distinction between *Leucothrinax* and related palms.

Widespread and common in the Caribbean region, *Leucothrinax morrisii* occurs across a range of habitats in Florida, the Greater Antilles, and the western Lesser Antilles. It has a conservation status of "least concern" (Zona et al. 2007) under the World Conservation Union criteria (IUCN 2006). Nevertheless, it represents unexpected diversity in the Caribbean palm flora and suggests that further phylogenetic research may uncover additional surprises. This research must be done quickly, as many Caribbean palms are in rapid decline, along with the threatened areas they inhabit (Zona et al. 2007).

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