

OTHER WAYS YOU CAN HELP

Promote the use of Chamaedorea beyond Easter: Encourage parishioners to use certified palms in their wedding or funeral floral arrangements.

Support market impetus at home: Get involved and informed about the many ways you can improve people's livelihoods through market efforts here at home. Organize informational seminars and invite your local florist suppliers to gain their interest and inform them of how they can benefit from participating in these efforts.

Sponsor a forest community: Find forest communities in either Mexico or Guatemala where efforts are under way that are consistent with your congregation's social and environmental justice initiatives.

WHERE DO THE BENEFITS GO?



WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW?

Palm is a non-timber forest product (NTFP). The resources below offer more information on the broad range of NTFPs found in the forest with potential to diversify forest dweller's incomes.

RESOURCES

Amazon Conservation Association
(www.amazonconservation.org)

Commission for Environmental Cooperation
(www.cec.org/pubs_docs/documents/index.cfm?varlan=english&ID=42)

Conservation International
(www.conservation.org)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
(www.fao.org)

World Resources Institute, Forest Frontiers Initiative
(www.wri.org/ffi)

If you are interested in ordering palms for this coming Palm Sunday and Easter activities, please call the Center for Integrated Natural Resources and Agricultural Management:

Dean Current 612-624-4299
or
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CHAMAEDORA PALMS FOR EASTER

PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND FAIR TRADE

Equity through alliance



IN SEARCH OF AN EQUITABLE MARKET IN NORTH AMERICA

ABOUT CHAMAEDOREA

Non-oil palm plants are used in many facets of life, including religious ceremonies, party decorations, and food and household products. Palm fronds, plants, and seeds, which are harvested in areas of Mexico and Guatemala, are exported to North American distributors for use as ornamental indoor plants and decoration in floral arrangements.

Did you know?

- ✿ Approximately 308 million palm fronds were consumed in the United States in 1998.
- ✿ A congregation of 1,100 to 1,500 members will order approximately 700 palm fronds for Palm Sunday services.
- ✿ At least half of the farmers in the Central Peten of Guatemala earn additional income from harvesting fronds, and more than a quarter of household heads support themselves exclusively by collecting fronds.
- ✿ Each palm plant produces 2 to 5 harvestable leaves over a 2 to 4 month period.
- ✿ Palm purchases for Palm Sunday may be worth up to 4.5 million dollars/year.
- ✿ Palm gathering actually protects valuable natural forests

HOW YOU CAN HELP CREATE A SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD IN THE TROPICS?

Harvesting palm products is an important source of supplemental income for many individuals and communities. Unfortunately, over harvesting palm can threaten the livelihood of these communities as well as the shaded forests where the palm plant thrives. Uncontrolled exploitation of these forest products will lead to the rapid depletion of their rich biodiversity, including the many bird species that migrate to these regions during the winter. On the other hand, decreased harvesting caused by reduced market demand could have the same detrimental effect because forests that no longer provide a source of palm income are at risk of destructive conversion to large agricultural fields for other crops.

Protecting these forests and local jobs requires a delicate balance between retaining a market for palm and encouraging sustainable harvesting practices. Markets for palm must remain steady to prevent the forests from being destroyed for other uses. At the same time, those markets must be supplied with sustainably harvested palm to protect the unique and important biodiversity of the region and maintain the local communities' standard of living.

There is currently an effort to certify palms from communities practicing sustainable forestry. These communities have taken it upon themselves to learn about good harvesting practices that minimize the impact of their harvesting activities on the natural forest where the palm grows and of ways to protect this wild species of palm.

By certifying these operations, communities who engage in good management practices have the opportunity to benefit directly by receiving a higher price for their palms.

You can help to launch this initiative by participating in this pilot program. We are currently attempting to make a first transaction between a certified palm operation and congregations in the United States. By ordering palms for the upcoming Easter Celebration through this program, you will show forest communities in Guatemala and Mexico that people are willing to pay for a better environment and a more just distribution of benefits from NTFPs.

HOW TO WORK WITH YOUR RETAILER/DISTRIBUTOR

Talk to your current palm distributor(s) and ask if they are aware of the source of their palm fronds. Let them know about your environmental and social justice concerns. Ask them if they would be willing to participate in distributing chamaedora palm fronds from certified operations.

HOW TO WORK WITH YOUR CONGREGATION

Inform your parishioners about the opportunity to improve the conservation of forests and forest species by improving the livelihoods of people living near the forests. Instruct them about the value of their consumer choices and how these choices have direct impacts on the environment and social justice.