

Coontie Palm

Like all cycads, the coontie has ancient origins. But this Florida plant is the only cycad native to North America. It's also the preferred food source for larvae of the rare *Atala* butterfly.

The coontie (*Zamia integrifolia*) looks like a small fern and is typically one to three feet tall. It has stiff, glossy, featherlike leaves attached to a thick, short, underground stem. Florida's native people once ground up the stems to create a starchy flour for cooking. Don't try this yourself, though—the stem is toxic unless prepared properly.

Because of its high drought tolerance and moderate salt tolerance, the coontie is an excellent choice for the coastal landscape. And it's cold-hardy, too. Coonties can be planted in sun or shade and can be used as a specimen plant or in foundation and massed plantings throughout the state.

