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# Flagler Horticulture

**Reprints of the newspaper column<sup>1</sup>  
by Chuck Lippi<sup>2</sup>**

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Q Can I remove the seed heads from my sabal palms? I heard we shouldn't cut too much off of palm trees. But I have heard others say hurricane cuts are important to keep palms safe during windstorms.

A Good question. Yes, you can remove seed heads at any time. Some people like the look of the seed spikes (heads) while other prefer to remove them. You are correct, however, about cutting too much off palms trees. Hurricane cuts are over-rated and over-done. A proper hurricane cut will remove dead palm leaves and all seed heads that can blow in the wind and become projectiles during tropical storms and hurricanes. At most lower foliage can be removed up to but not beyond an imaginary line running parallel to the ground and no higher than mid-point through the center of the palm crown.

The biggest problem for palm trees during this pruning process is that they are generally pruned too much. By excessive pruning, I am referring to the removal of green fronds or leaves, and it is the palm tree leaves that manufacture carbohydrates through photosynthesis. Palm fronds are also a storage site for carbohydrates and minerals such as those minerals found in fertilizers. Cutting off too many fronds will weaken a palm tree by taking away stored carbohydrates that is being stored for future growth. Continual over-pruning of palms weakens them, slows growth and makes the palms susceptible to pest problems.