

FGCU Food Forest

Plant Database

Coontie (*Zamia floridana*)

Quick Facts

Origin: Florida

Description: 2-4ft tall with feather-like leathery foliage

Harvest: N/A

Flower: N/A

Tolerance: Tolerates shade and poor soil, as long as it is well-draining



General Description: The coontie is a non-flowering plant, and the last remaining member of its family – Cycad – in the United States. The leaves emerge from a large underground storage root, before later developing a trunk. The plants can be either male or female, and they both produce cones. The cones of the female eventually fall apart into bright orange segments. The coontie is an incredibly slow-growing plant.

- **Native Origin:** Florida
- **General History:** The coontie root was an important source of starch to the Calusa Indians, Seminoles, and settlers who succeeded them. In the early 20th century, there were several mills in South Florida processing the root and marketing it as “Florida Arrowroot”. It is toxic until properly processed, and is therefore a labor-intensive process. The coontie is the host plant for the Atala butterfly.
- **Distribution:** Southern United States
- **Season of Harvest:** All year, once mature.

- **Culinary Uses:** Not recommended, but possible. Preparation information from Green Deane at eattheweeds.com: “Must be cleaned, peeled, mashed, washed, settled, fermented then dried or used as a mash in soups et cetera. The seeds are not edible and are toxic to touch.”

Coontie	
Scientific Classification	
Kingdom:	Plantae
Division:	Cycadophyta
Class:	Cycadopsida
Order:	Cycadales
Family:	Zamiaceae
Genus:	<i>Zamia</i>
Species:	<i>Z. floridana</i>

Sources

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fp617>

<http://www.eattheweeds.com/zamia-floridana-making-toxins-edible-2/>

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