

Two New Loppers

by Charlie Beck

I recently purchased two new loppers. Each lopper advertised a feature which would ease specific tasks in the garden. One had a whopping 3" cutting capacity and the other had a 3x mechanical advantage without the typical compound linkage. With more than 1000 palms planted in our garden, we have our share of fallen and trimmed fronds. Rather than dragging these fronds to the curb for pickup, I cut up the fronds to use as mulch. Ultimately these fronds break down like any other mulch and enrich the soil with organic compost. I can spend several hours each week cutting fronds, so finding a lopper with a larger cutting capacity or one with a durable mechanical advantage would save a lot of effort. I describe those two new loppers below.

The Corona WL 6490 lopper with 37" long hickory handles boasted a full 3" cutting capacity. This extra capacity allows me to cut through large palm fronds with a single cut. *Bismarckia* and *Cocos* petioles are no match for these super duty loppers. As with all Corona products, these are heavy duty and are high quality. Corona uses a forged hook and a large resharpenable blade. All repair parts are available at Corona's website. These loppers have a single pivot point so they rely on the long handles for mechanical advantage. The wooden handles have adequate strength to cut through large fronds. These loppers are noticeably heavier than ones with aluminum handles. Carrying them around for hours at a time does take additional effort. A nice feature of this model is the spring loaded shock stop bumper. It seems more durable than a rubber bumper which requires regular replacement. Do not expect to cut through 3" diameter hardwood branches with these loppers. There is not enough leverage with the single pivot mechanism and the 37" handles. It's fine for cutting through palm fronds though. When these loppers are opened the handles are widely spread. This requires a lot of clearance for the handles when maneuvering in tight situations. The wide spread handles also make these loppers less convenient to carry around the garden. These loppers are competitively priced when compared to other professional quality products. Because of their large cutting capacity, they have become my pruner of choice for cutting palm fronds.



Corona Lopper

Handle spread grasping 1.8" bamboo



Fiskars Lopper

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The Fiskars 32" PowerGear lopper claimed a 3x mechanical advantage due its PowerGear design. The cutting capacity is 2 inches. The mechanical advantage of this lopper is not overstated. The gear mechanism does deliver extra cutting power. The mechanical advantage reduces the effort required to cut small palm petioles or woody branches but their use is limited due to its 2" maximum cutting capacity. Another disadvantage is that the handles must be widely spread to open the cutting jaws. This requires quite a bit of clearance around the branch you want to cut. Sometimes you don't have the handle clearance you need when you are pruning in tight areas. The PowerGear design is a great improvement over other compound action loppers that I have used in the past. The gear mechanism is simple and I expect it will be quite durable. The handles are hollow aluminum which make these loppers very light to carry. The handles close enough to allow easy one handed carrying around the garden. These are not professional quality loppers. Long term durability is unknown. They are sold at box hardware stores and are quite inexpensive. Replacement blades are available on Fiskars' website. This lopper has become my lopper of choice when pruning woody branches and small palm fronds.

In the March 2011 Newsletter I reviewed four additional loppers. Two of those loppers, the Felco Model 22 and the Fred Marvin "Garden of Eden" models are still highly recommended. Our website now contains an indexed list and full text of all Newsletters dating back to January 2009. It also has a site search feature which allows you to quickly find past subjects. If you are considering buying loppers, I encourage you to visit our website for this article at the address listed below:

http://www.palmbeachpalmycadsociety.com/newsletter/News_2011_03.pdf



Corona

Fiskars

Corona WS6490 Forged

Super Duty Bypass Lopper
Retail \$166.67 Discount \$112.33
Cut Capacity 3 inches
Length 37 inches
Weight 5.2 pounds

Fiskars PowerGear

Bypass Lopper (8154)
Retail \$47.99 Discount \$45.44
Cut Capacity 2 inches
Length 32 inches
Weight 2.8 pounds