

PALM INFORMATION CHART

NAME	LEAF	HABIT	HEIGHT	SPREAD	GROWTH	LIGHT	TEMP.	WIND	CLIMATE
KING PALM (ARCHONTOPHOENIX CUNNINGHAMIANA)	Ft	S	30-50'	20'	M	S	28-105°	N	C,I,V
MEXICA BLUE PALM (BRAHEA ARMATA)	Fn	S	20'	10'	S	S	20-120°	Y	C,I,V,D
GUADALUPE PALM (BRAHEA EDULIS)	Fn	S	20'	15'	S	S	20-105°	Y	C,I,V,LD
PINDO PALM (BUTIA CAPITATA)	Ft	S	20'	15'	S	S	15-120°	Y	C,I,V,D
FISHTAIL PALM (CARYOTA MITIS)	Ft	C	15'	15'	S	PS	28-105°	N	C,I,V
BAMBOO PALM (CHAMAEDOREA)	Ft	S,C	10'	3-6'	S	SH,PS	28-105°	N	C,I,V
MEDITERRANEAN FAN PALM (CHAMAEROPS HUMILIS)	Fn	C	15'	15'	S	S	20-120°	Y	C,I,V,D
KENTIA PALM (HOWEA FORSTERIANA)	Ft	S	30'	10'	S	S,PS	28-105°	N	C,I
TRIANGLE PALM (DYPSPIS DECARYI)	Ft	S	15'	10'	S	S	30-115°	N	C,I,V
CANARY ISLAND DATE PALM (PHOENIX CANARIENSIS)	Ft	S	60'	35'	M	S	20-110°	Y	C,I,V,D
DATE PALM (PHOENIX DACTYLIFERA)	Ft	C,S	60'	25'	M	S	20-120°	Y	C,I,V,D
SENEGAL DATE PALM (PHOENIX RECLINATA)	Ft	C	40'	30'	S-M	S	25-110°	Y	C,I,V
PYGMY DATE PALM (PHOENIX ROEBELINII)	Ft	S	10'	5'	S	S,PS	28-105°	N	C,I,V
MAJESTY PALM (RAVENEA RIVULARIS)	Ft	S	25'	12'	S-M	S	30-105°	N	C,I,V
LADY PALM (RHAPIS)	Fn	C	12'	3-6'	S	PS	25-105°	N	C,I,V
QUEEN PALM (SYAGRUS ROMANZOFFIANA)	Ft	S	50'	12'	M	S	25-115°	Y	C,I,V,LD
WINDMILL PALM (TRACHYCARPUS FORTUNEI)	Fn	S	15'	5'	S-M	S	10-115°	N	C,I,V,D
CALIFORNIA FAN PALM (WASHINGTONIA FILIFERA)	Fn	S	60'	15'	M-F	S	15-120°	Y	V,D
MEXICAN FAN PALM (WASHINGTONIA ROBUSTA)	Fn	S	70'	10'	F	S	15-120°	Y	C,I,V,D

Leaf: Fn=fan; Ft=feather. **Habit:** S=single; C=clumping. **Spread:** width of crown of leaves. **Growth:** S=<one foot/year; M=1-2 feet per year; F=>2 feet per year. **Light:** S=full sun; pS=part sun; Sh=full shade. **Wind:** N=no, needs protection; Y=yes. **Climate:** C=within five miles of coast; I=5-15 miles of coast; V=interior valleys (San Fernando, SanGabriel, San Bernardino-Riverside); D=desert, ID=low desert only.

GARDEN INFORMATION SERIES



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PALMS

THEIR SELECTION, PLANTING, AND CARE



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Palms give a uniquely dramatic, exotic, and tropical effect to the home yard and landscape. They are the signature plants of Southern California and its lifestyle. Since their bold lines and striking nature ensure that they are always the center of attention, the proper selection, planting, and care of palms is important.

SELECTION

It is important to select the right palm for the right place in the home yard or landscape. When selecting a palm be sure its form, ultimate size, and adaptability to a particular environment are compatible with the intended site and use.

Palms have two basic leaf shapes and two growth forms (habits) that help to determine their use and placement in the home yard and landscape. They have either fan leaves or feather leaves and either one stem or clumps of several stems. Fan leaves are hand-shaped and have the leaf segments radiating from a center point. Feather leaves have leaf segments distributed along both sides of an elongated central leafstalk. Palms with a

single stem become treelike while those with clumping stems are shrublike. Palms with clumping stems can be made into tree palms by thinning out the clump, leaving only several, well-spaced stems and removing lower, older leaves. Similarly, single-stemmed palms can be made to look like clumping palms by planting several closely together in the same hole. See the chart for a summary of the types of palms and their environmental adaptability.

Since palms are the primadonnas of the plant world, they can easily clash with each other and compete for attention if used inappropriately, distracting significantly from the desired effect. Avoid planting palms in groups of numerous, indiscriminately massed individuals of the same or different kinds. Instead, use palms informally to draw attention to a particular part of the garden or impart a tropical accent. Employ single-stemmed palms as well for vertical accent while sacrificing little precious ground space to bring into scale large houses or other tall structures or to divide large volumes of air.

Palms in informal settings are most effective if planted individually or, if space permits, in small groups of three or five close but separate specimens of the same kind. Remember that

one clumping palm can readily take the place of three to five single-stemmed ones. Use clumping palms as a background, or as a screen or barrier to block unsightly views. Employ the same kind and size of palm repetitively in a regular, orderly fashion to achieve a more formal effect, such as lining a driveway, walk, or property boundary. Palms are naturals around water, and their relatively few, large leaves and flowerstalks mean a few timely cuts will remove any litter waiting to foul a swimming pool, stream, or pond.

With our ever-diminishing home yards, one must seriously consider the ultimate size and, to some extent, growth rate when selecting palms. Give palms enough space so that when their leaves reach full size they are not clashing with adjacent structures, trees, and other palms. Since palms lack a woody tap root, they make excellent and versatile, long-term potted specimens, which can be moved around the garden or yard to best advantage.

Environmental factors to consider when selecting a palm include light, temperature, humidity, and wind. Nearly all large tree palms require full sun for most of the day while the smaller ones, such as bamboo palms and lady palms, do best in full shade or only

part sun. Palms that do best in part sun in hotter inland regions often tolerate more sun in cooler coastal areas.

Some palms are sensitive to cold and some are even sensitive to heat. They will suffer damage or even death if temperatures go too high or low. Temperature-sensitive palms do best when grown in coastal areas with more moderate temperatures. Conversely, other palms tolerate extreme heat and cold, and in Southern California will grow from the desert to the sea. Generally, larger, older, healthier palms usually are less sensitive to temperature extremes and recover from damage more quickly than smaller ones of the same kind. No palms are sufficiently hardy to grow in the mountains.

Humidity, or the amount of moisture in the air, influences a palm's sensitivity to light and temperature. That some palms are poorly adapted to inland areas is due as much to the less humid, more arid conditions as it is to temperature extremes. Conversely, the California fan palm easily tolerates temperatures in coastal areas but often grows poorly there and has disease problems because of the humid, moist air.

Although most palms are wind tolerant, a few can have their bold, dramatic foliage torn

or shredded by wind, detracting considerably from their beauty and ornamental effect. Plant wind-sensitive palms on the wind-protected side of larger trees or shrubs, homes, or other structures. Nearly all palms suffer leaf damage when exposed to constant, often salt-laden sea breezes.

PLANTING

Container-grown palms can be planted year round in Southern California. Dig a hole the same depth as the root ball of the palm. Dust the hole with dolomite lime to provide magnesium, a nutrient which palms use in large amounts. Carefully remove the palm from the container and place in the hole. Use the same soil from the hole without any added amendments to backfill around the root ball. Tamp firmly to remove large air pockets but avoid compacting the soil. Mound excess soil to form a water basin three inches high and at least as wide as the hole. Place a two-inch layer of mulch in the basin and water thoroughly. Keep the root ball and surrounding soil moist but not wet. Keep grass and weeds away from the stem and root ball.

CARE

Palms are virtually maintenance free except for watering

and periodic fertilizing and removal of unsightly dead leaves and flowerstalks. Unless there is sufficient rain, water palms whenever the top inch or two of soil becomes dry. Apply enough water each time to wet the soil to at least 12 inches deep. Use a shovel or probe to check if necessary. Some of the hardy palms once established can tolerate periods of several weeks or even a month with no added water, especially in the cooler winter months. Periodically apply a palm special fertilizer (one with high nitrogen, potassium, and magnesium), carefully following the label directions. Remove leaves once they have begun to turn yellow or brown, and flowerstalks once they have completely emerged by cutting them off neatly and as close to the stem as possible, taking care not to damage or scar the stem.

Ask your nursery or garden center professional for additional information and assistance about palms and their care.

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