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## **PALM CARE IN NORTH TEXAS**

Even the hardiest palms do not like to be coated in ice. Windmill palms, and to a lesser extent, Sago palms, don't mind snow or light freezes, but ice or severe cold can damage these plants. The plants should be tied up and wrapped in frost cloth when significant ice storms OR heavy freezing weather is predicted. (Unwrap them again when the heaviest chill is gone.) For example, we have had Windmill palms in containers uncovered outside in 27 degrees F weather with two inches of snow without ill effect. Snow is not as cold as ice on the leaves of the plant. Additionally, don't forget to water to soil around the palm before we have a freeze! This does make a difference.

Palms in this area are rarely directly killed by cold temperatures; rather, the effects of "frostbite" affecting and damaging the palms in a recoverable way can lead to a condition known as crown rot – which can certainly kill a palm. To prevent this, spray your palm, particularly in the heart of the trunk with ferti-lome Systemic Fungicide once as we enter the cold season, and again each time after a heavy freeze or significant ice - especially if you see cold damaged fronds on your palm (which are not normally all that serious since the plant will usually make new ones in the Spring growth cycle if this happens).

Some palms are simply hardier than others. Most used in this area are Windmill palms and Mediterranean Fan palms. Also usable with MORE caution for winter cold snaps are: Pindo palms, Mexican Fan palms and Sago palms (which are actually cycads and not palms). Other varieties are also beautiful but simply must have more precautions taken...enough to make the plant unreasonable to grow in this area for most people. These other beautiful palms should be wrapped whenever any significant freezing weather is predicted if left outside. Significant freezing weather for this purpose is anything under 29-30 degrees F.

All palms become MORE cold resistant the older and more established they become. A young plant without a heavy, established root system is more susceptible to shock and damage from cold weather. Older plants have tougher, more leathery foliage that will take heavier cold with less damage.

No palm is completely cold tolerant! With proper and reasonable care however many types of palms can be grown in this area without an undue amount of risk – and the beauty of palms make them worth a bit of work!

Don't forget to water your palms in the Summer! Palms love heat but they also like a moderate amount of water. Keep them moist to keep them beautiful in the Summer.

# Some Information about Our Palms

## **Windmill Palm: Trachycarpus Fortunei**

This palm is one of our toughest for this area. Windmill palms can reach a height of 20' (eventually) in the landscape, and is cold hardy down to 10 degrees F. In the DFW Metroplex, it is rarely necessary to cover or wrap this palm at any point during the winter, generally only for truly severe freezing weather or ice storms.

Windmill palms are a more narrow-growing palm than many, usually staying no more than 8-10' wide. Feed it with Carl Pool Palm Food. To prevent "yellow tipping", add a magnesium supplement at least once a year (Epsom salts). Plant in full sun to partial shade.

## **Pindo Palm: Butia Capitata**

Pindo palm is hardy to 15 degrees F, and should only need occasional wrapping for severe cold or for ice storms. This palm grows from 10-20' tall in the landscape, with beautiful arching leaves that can reach 10' long! Pindos are sometimes called Jelly palms because their fruit (rare in this area) is edible and usually made into preserves or jellies. The fronds have an attractive blue-green to blue-gray-green tinting. Pindo palms will live in areas of tremendous stress! Concrete areas around them aren't so bad, or even asphalt – this plant takes heat and drought stresses very well. Plant in full sun to some limited shade.

## **Sago Palm: Cycas Revoluta**

Sago palms are a wonderful smaller "palm" for use in the areas regular palm trees are just too big for! Not a true palm at all, Sago palms are actually cycads, one of the oldest plant families around...Cycads haven't changed much in 200 million years!

Plant Sago palms in full sun to light shade. This plant is a slow grower, so while it won't jump to massive growth in a single year, it is easily maintained and keeps a symmetrical form without pruning of any sort. Sago palms are hardy to 15 degrees F, but wrap them for hard, extended freezes or ice storms. Average landscape size is 6' tall and 6' wide.

## **Mexican Fan Palm: Washingtonia Robusta**

The Mexican Fan palm is a faster growing upright palm tree that will adapt to a large range of soils types and is quite drought tolerant. They are hardy to 20 degrees F without difficulty, but need wrapping below that. Many Mexican Fan palms have done well throughout this area with no protection whatsoever in the last ten years, but wrapping for heavy ice and severe freezing is still recommended. This palm will gain height quickly!

### **Mediterranean Fan Palm: Chamaerops Humilis**

This is a shorter growing palm for use in areas in which too great a height is undesirable. Mediterranean Fan palms are hardy for our zone, but like the Mexican Fan palm, covering or wrapping is recommended for extended cold freezes and heavy ice. Light snow is not a problem for them. They are hardy to 20 degrees F without trouble.

The Mediterranean Fan palm is a slower growing palm which is suitable for use in large containers for years, or in the ground as a shorter accent piece. These palms are rarely the same twice! It is not unusual for every single one of them in a nursery row to look a little different in form and height from its neighbor.

### **Sabal Palm: Sabal Palmetto**

The Sabal palm is the state tree of both Florida and South Carolina! This is a very widely used palm throughout the southern U.S., and is hardy to 20 degrees F or even colder when well established. It is similar in growth characteristics to a Windmill palm, but has a striking pattern of "boots" (where the lower leaves once were part of the trunk, then cut as the leaves aged). These "boots" will usually stay on for years and give the Sabal palm a unique look which is far less "hairy" than the trunk of a Windmill palm.