Why Not Try A New Palm In Your Patio?

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The palm has been a widely accepted landscape tree in the desert areas of Arizona, yet this plant has not been used to its ultimate capacity.

Four varieties, the Mexican Fan palm (*Washingtonia robusta*), California Fan palm (*Washingtonia filifera*), and the two feather palms, the fruiting date (*Phoenix dactylifera*) and the ornamental date (*Phoenix cannariensis*) have been widely planted.

There are a number of other varieties perfectly adapted to Arizona conditions that by their growth habit are outstanding landscape specimens. A number of these, as well as the four listed above, are growing on the campus of the University of Arizona at Tucson.

Campus Is A Laboratory

The University over the years has, as each new building is completed, used in the landscape development of the buildings plants that are not commonly found in the Tucson area. The purpose is dual: first of all, outstanding landscaping and secondly, experimentation. The net result is a campus that in effect is a botanical garden of many rare species and a public proving ground of plant materials for the warmer areas of the state.

The dominant landscape theme of the University of Arizona campus is palms and red brick buildings. The palms consist mainly of the four varieties previously described. A number of other varieties have also been growing successfully for many years, such as the Queen palms. A striking tree is the Mexican blue fan palm, a slow growing, rare and exotic landscape specimen. The ultimate size of this tree is 40 feet. It is a native of lower California, is planted in southern California, and in Arizona an excellent planting exists at the Mormon Temple in Mesa.

Interesting Dwarf Palm

In addition, a very dwarf palm called the Mediterranean Fan palm may be grown, a hardy species and a single trunk variety. Several others of this genus are well adapted to Arizona conditions.

The Sabal palm or Pametto palm, native to Texas and the gulf states, is a fan type but had not been planted to any extent in Arizona previously because of the public's unfamiliarity with the species. A mature specimen has been growing for many years at the University of Arizona.

Should Be Carefully Placed

These are key accent plants and should be so placed in the landscape that their full use in relation to the architecture of structures is realized. The palm, generally speaking, is a plant that will withstand many extremes of temperature, moisture, and soil conditions. It is an exception to most plants in that it prefers to be transplanted during periods of hot weather rather than cool. Palms of all sizes transplant readily.

All palms are almost singularly free of insect problems and diseases in Arizona. In addition to their beauty, this freedom from disease and insects adds to their value as landscape specimens.

LEFT TO RIGHT, Mexican Blue Palm, Queen Palm and Mediterranean Palm.

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growing over grass blades giving a "smoky" appearance to the invaded grasses. The disease is important as a root and crown-rot. Large, roughly circular areas may be entirely killed.

High soil nitrogen results in severe brown patch damage. The addition of small amounts of nitrogen fertilizer during the growing season is preferable to a heavy application at one time.

Water In Morning

Late afternoon and evening watering is particularly objectionable in the case of this disease. Since the sclerotia from which the fungus grows to attack the grass plants are on or near the soil surface, drying of the soil surface as quickly as possible after watering is a must. Frequent, light sprinklings should be avoided. To best prevent this and the other diseases mentioned above, a lawn area should be soaked to a depth of four to six inches and watered again only when the first sign of wilting appears. The frequency of watering will depend on soil type. Should Brown Patch appear in spite of the use of correct cultural practices a Calo Cure-Tersan mixture should be used. One ounce each in 10 gallons of water to 1,000 square feet, gives almost perfect control.

Since no single fungicide has been found that will control all diseases in lawns, it is important that the fungus causing the disease be identified. If specimens plus information about growing conditions, care given and any other pertinent information are sent to the University of Arizona's Department of Plant Pathology, the cause of the disease can usually be determined and control advice given.