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Seeds for Africa

Foxtail Palm

Make shallow cuts in the seed coat or rub it with sandpaper.

Fill a pot with at least six inches of a potting medium made up of two parts perlite and one part peat. Cover the seed with a quarter inch of potting medium.

Keep the medium moist and use a plastic bag to keep the atmosphere humid. Change the bag if mould begins to grow.

Wait for the seed to germinate. This can take anywhere from a month to a year, but usually takes from one to three months. To increase the speed of germination, place a heating pad heated to 90 degrees F underneath the pot.

Transplant the foxtail palm once the seed has germinated in the early spring or summer. Choose an area with full sun and well-drained soil. Dig a hole the depth of the root ball and twice its width. Place the palm in the hole and refill, packing down the soil.

Apply a two- to three-inch layer of mulch around the base of the tree. This will improve water retention, keep weeds at bay and protect the roots.

Water the foxtail palm keeping it moist, but not soaked, for the first four to six months after transplantation. After it is fully established, weekly watering when dry will help the palm to flourish.

Apply a palm fertilizer once a month in the growing season. Foxtail palms often develop potassium deficiencies, so use a slow-releasing fertilizer that is heavy in potassium.

A foxtail palm tree (*Wodyetia bifurcata*) is a species native to Australia that can also be grown in other parts of the world where the climate is tropical or subtropical, such as California, Texas or Florida. It is often favoured for its

foliage, with fronds that arch out at all angles to form a shape similar to the tail of a fox, which is where it gets its name. Foxtail palms produce a creamy white flower and bunches of fruit that are green and then red when ripe.

GROWING CONDITIONS:

Because they are hardy, foxtail palms are considered easy to grow. They will grow in virtually any well-drained soil, including sandy or rocky soil. It will likely do best growing in full sun, but partial shade locations are also tolerable for the foxtail palm. As a plant native to northern Australia, they are quite drought-resistant. In cooler months, occasional waterings are needed. During the rest of the year, it's best to regularly provide a good, deep watering. Over-watering can be a concern with foxtail palms, so be sure not to give too much water at once.

MAINTENANCE:

Fertilize foxtail palms regularly to promote growth and good health. The ideal fertilizer should contain slow-release potassium, otherwise the tree could develop a potassium deficiency. Choose a fertilizer that is rich in micronutrients. When a foxtail palm is properly maintained, which will require proper watering, it typically grows between 2 and 3 feet a year, reaching a maximum height of about 30 feet. A foxtail palm can also typically tolerate strong ocean winds and some mild to moderate salt sprays.

USES:

Because of their height, foxtail palms are generally grown outdoors. They are commonly used to line streets or driveways, but they are also popular in yards or landscaped beds. When grown in groups of two, three or four they can provide a large backdrop for a nicely landscaped yard or garden. Foxtail palms can also be grown in a pot on a porch or patio, and they can easily be grown indoors as long as it is given a brightly lit area in which to grow. Because of their size, they are not necessarily appropriate to grow at home, but look nice in a building atrium or lobby.

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