



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Chamaerops humilis*¹

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Introduction

This small, multi-stemmed, hardy palm is the only one native to Europe, and is hardier than most palms (Fig. 1). The curved, clumping, short trunks and gray-green, fan-shaped leaves, borne thickly in a bushy head, make a stunning sculptural element in a garden or patio containers. The fine-textured fronds make the palm stand out from other plants in the landscape. Leaf color on individual plants ranges from light green through silver. Although growth rate is slow, it is well worth the wait since even small plants will stand out nicely in almost any landscape.

General Information

Scientific name: *Chamaerops humilis*

Pronunciation: ku-MEE-rops HEW-mil-liss

Common name(s): European Fan Palm

Family: *Palmae*

Plant type: tree; shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 8B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: specimen; container or above-ground planter; near a deck or patio; foundation; border; mass planting; accent; suitable for growing indoors

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range



Figure 1. European Fan Palm.

Description

Height: 8 to 15 feet

Spread: 6 to 10 feet

Plant habit: upright; irregular outline or silhouette

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: slow

Texture: fine

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

- Leaf arrangement:** alternate
- Leaf type:** simple
- Leaf margin:** lobed
- Leaf shape:** star-shaped
- Leaf venation:** palmate
- Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen
- Leaf blade length:** more than 36 inches
- Leaf color:** silver/gray; blue or blue-green
- Fall color:** no fall color change
- Fall characteristic:** not showy

Flower

- Flower color:** yellow
- Flower characteristic:** spring flowering

Fruit

- Fruit shape:** round
- Fruit length:** less than .5 inch
- Fruit cover:** dry or hard
- Fruit color:** brown
- Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

- Trunk/bark/branches:** showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; can be trained to grow with a short, single trunk
- Current year stem/twig color:** not applicable
- Current year stem/twig thickness:** not applicable

Culture

- Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun
- Soil tolerances:** alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam
- Drought tolerance:** high
- Soil salt tolerances:** poor
- Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

By removing suckers from the base of the main trunk, this slightly salt-tolerant palm may also be trained as a single-trunked palm. Since the leaf stalks are spiny, Fan Palm may also be used as a barrier, planted three to five feet apart. It makes a nice accent plant in a shrub border or in a low-growing groundcover. It can also be planted several feet apart in a mass on a large-scale landscape forming a fine-textured accent area. Growing best in moist rich soil, it is drought- and wind-resistant, and established plants will survive temperatures to 10-degrees F. or below, in full sun or light shade. Plants grow very slowly in the shade.

Propagation is by seed or division.

Scale may be a problem.

Pests and Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.