Cycas circinalis

Edward F. Gilman

Introduction

The palm-like Queen Sago has a short, dark brown, unbranching trunk topped with graceful, arching, medium green, feathery leaves, six to eight feet long (Fig. 1). Although slow-growing, Queen Sago is much prized for its light-textured tropical effect and easy care and makes an excellent lawn specimen or container plant for large areas. It is usually located as a specimen where it can be viewed from all sides but could be mass planted on 8 to 19 foot centers on a large scale industrial or commercial landscape. Many people plant it too close to a building, window or walkway and, unfortunately, need to remove leaves to allow for clearance.

General Information

Scientific name: Cycas circinalis
Pronunciation: SYE-kus sur-sin-NAL-liss
Common name(s): Queen Sago
Family: Cycadaceae
Plant type: shrub
USDA hardiness zones: 10 through 11 (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: border; accent; suitable for growing indoors
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 6 to 15 feet
Spread: 8 to 12 feet

Foliage

Plant habit: palm
Plant density: moderate
Growth rate: slow
Texture: fine
Leaf arrangement: spiral

Figure 1. Queen Sago.

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-161, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1999. Please visit the EDIS web site at http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu.
2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap, or national origin. For information on obtaining other extension publications, contact your county Cooperative Extension Service office. Florida Cooperative Extension Service / Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences / University of Florida / Christine Taylor Waddill, Dean
**Leaf type:** even-pinnately compound  
**Leaf margin:** entire  
**Leaf shape:** lanceolate  
**Leaf venation:** none, or difficult to see  
**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen  
**Leaf blade length:** 8 to 12 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** no fall color change  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy

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

**Flower**  
**Flower color:** no flowers  
**Flower characteristic:** no flowers

**Fruit**  
**Fruit shape:** elongated  
**Fruit length:** 1 to 3 inches  
**Fruit cover:** dry or hard  
**Fruit color:** brown  
**Fruit characteristic:** showy

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

**Culture**

**Other**  
**Roots:** usually not a problem  
**Winter interest:** no special winter interest  
**Outstanding plant:** plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more  
**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive  
**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests
Use and Management

When given sufficient room to spread, Queen Sago performs very well in shade or full sun and needs only occasional watering once established. It is too large for many small landscapes. King sago would be a good substitute in a small residential landscape.

Plants are usually propagated by seed but can also be started by division of suckers.

Scale can be a minor problem. Thrips can disfigure foliage.

Pests and Diseases

Leaf-spotting diseases usually cause only minor problems.