

Cycas circinalis Queen Sago, Sago Palm¹

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Introduction

The palm-like queen sago has a short, dark brown, unbranching trunk topped with graceful, arching, medium green, feathery leaves, 6 to 8 feet long. 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.



Figure 1. Full Form - *Cycas circinalis*: Queen Sago
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

General Information

Scientific name: *Cycas circinalis*

Pronunciation: SYE-kus sur-sin-NAL-liss

Common name(s): queen sago, sago palm

Family: *Cycadaceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 10 through 11 (Figure 2)



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

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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

Plant habit: palm

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: slow

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: spiral

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

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

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

Culture

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

Other

Roots: usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

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.

Pests and Diseases

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

Leaf-spotting diseases usually cause only minor problems.