

Zamia furfuracea Cardboard Plant, Cardboard Cycad¹

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Introduction

The rigid, woody, medium-green foliage of cardboard plant emerges from a large underground storage root and forms a loose, spreading, symmetrical rosette. Providing a tropical landscape effect, cardboard plant's mounding growth habit is ideally suited for use in containers or as a specimen. Several can be planted together for a lush, tropical effect. They also create a dramatic effect when mass-planted in a shrub border, eventually reaching to 6 or 8 feet tall. Plant on 3- to 5-foot centers to create a mass planting.



Figure 1. Full Form—*Zamia furfuracea*: Cardboard plant, cardboard cycad.

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Figure 2. Leaf—*Zamia furfuracea*: Cardboard plant, cardboard cycad.

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Figure 3. Fruit—*Zamia furfuracea*: Cardboard plant, cardboard cycad.

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Figure 4. Fruit, Exposed Seeds—*Zamia furfuracea*: Cardboard plant, cardboard cycad.

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General Information

Scientific name: *Zamia furfuracea*

Pronunciation: ZAY-mee-uh fer-fer-RAY-see-uh

Common name(s): cardboard plant, cardboard cycad, cardboard palm

Family: *Zamiaceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11 (Figure 5)



Figure 5. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Planting month for zone 9: year-round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year-round

Origin: native to North America and Mexico

Invasive potential: caution – may be recommended by UF/IFAS faculty but should be managed to prevent its escape (reassess in 2 years)

Uses: border; mass planting; container or above-ground planter; specimen; suitable for growing indoors; accent

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: 2 to 5 feet

Spread: 5 to 8 feet

Plant habit: round

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: slow

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: spiral

Leaf type: even-pinnately compound

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: obovate

Leaf venation: parallel

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 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: 3 to 6 inches

Fruit cover: dry or hard

Fruit color: red

Fruit characteristic: showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not particularly 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: alkaline; sand; acidic; loam

Drought tolerance: high

Soil salt tolerances: good

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: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Growing in full sun or shade, cardboard plant tolerates a variety of well-drained soils. Watering should be done with moderation because plants are drought-tolerant once they become established. This plant is under-utilized, probably because of the slow growth rate. But patience is rewarded because this is one of nature's most attractive plants. It adapts easily to indoors as a house plant.

Propagation is by seed, which germinates fairly well several months after being cleaned and planted, or by division.

Pests and Diseases

Florida red scale is the main pest problem and can prove fatal if left unattended.

No diseases are of major concern.