

STARTING WITH SEEDS

We have harvested all the Chinese Windmill Palm Seeds (*Trachycarpus Fortunei*) from mature, local trees that have withstood the winters over the past two decades. The trees that have been chosen were the best examples that we could find in Richmond, Vancouver and Victoria, B.C. These fresh seeds produce top-quality seedlings that are acclimatized to the local Canadian environment and should be much hardier than seeds from trees grown in warmer climates.



The Windmill Palms are easy to grow and the following growing instructions for the *Trachycarpus Fortunei* seeds are also appropriate for other palms within the *Trachycarpus* family, including hybrids.

Pre-Planting Preparation:

The seeds will germinate faster and with a higher success rate if they are soaked in luke-warm water for three days, changing the water daily. To increase germination speed and reduce the risk of mould growth on the seeds, remove the papery outer layer. The easiest way to do this is to rub the seeds together in a coarse cloth bag.

Growing Medium:

We use a growing medium that is a combination of sterilized peat moss and perlite (Sunshine Mix 4 or Pro-Mix HP), or other similar products. The baled product is already sterile; however,

if you mix your own, you should sterilize it by heating it in the oven at 140 to 160 degrees Fahrenheit (hotter may kill the beneficial organisms).

Pots/growing containers:

There are many different types of containers that can be used to start the seeds. The easiest is to place seeds and damp (not wet) growing medium in a sealed zip-lock bag, and leave in a warm location. The seeds do not require light to germinate. Other containers that can be used include large clear plastic bins with lids that are 6 - 10 inches deep. Place a 3-inch layer of growing medium in the bottom of the container and then mix the seeds in another inch of growing medium and place this on top of the base layer. The seeds will sprout in 2 – 3 months with more rapid germination if the containers are placed in a warmer location, such as a greenhouse.

Transplanting:

The seedlings are ready for transplanting once the first leaf is 3 inches long. These seedlings can be potted individually into 4" pots, or communally into larger pots. A 1-gallon pot can accommodate 5-7 seedlings and a 2-gallon pot can accommodate 10-12 seedlings for one or two years, before being potted into individual 1-gallon pots.

Good quality soil such as Miracle-Gro potting soil will provide faster growing and healthier seedlings.

The potted plants are not as cold-hardy as plants that are in the ground, as the roots are more susceptible to freezing. The potted palms should be either kept in an area that will not freeze, such as in a garage or basement near a window, or the pot should be protected with bubble-wrap, or the similar insulation.

Fertilizing:

The palms should be fertilized in the growing season with a slow-release fertilizer such as Osmocote Plus 15-9-12. The slow-release fertilizer is in the Pacific Northwest around March 21, June 15, and August 15. Avoid fertilizing the palms after August.

Watering:

The growing medium should be moist, but not wet, and the surface of the pots should be allowed to dry out between watering.

Growth Rate:

Palms start relatively slowly, and the rate of growth increases with the size of the plant. Palms grow faster in the ground than in a pot. Once established, a mature Windmill Palm can grow one foot or more per year.

Other questions about palms and tropicals? See our other articles on the site. Visit www.cherrypointpalms.ca for more.

Happy palm growing!

Steven Read