

Chinese windmill palm

Trachycarpus fortunei

Family

Areaceae (palm)

Also known as

windmill palm

Where is it originally from?

China

What does it look like?

Palm with single, straight, branchless trunk (4-12 m tall). Dead leaves hang from the top of the trunk, forming a skirt. Upper trunk is covered with dark brown fibrous remains of old leaf stalk bases under this 'skirt', and lower part of mature trunk develops lumpy ringed bark. Large, round fan-shaped leaves (75 cm long x 100 cm wide), are divided into many narrow, pleated leaflets that droop at the tips. Leaf stalks are long (about 1 m) with stout sharp teeth along the margins. Many small yellow flowers (Nov-Jan) are held on a large, branched and drooping spike. Small, slightly flattened yellow berries (9 mm long x 12 mm wide) follow in March and ripen to blue-black.

Are there any similar species?

Trachycarpus fortunei is the only palm with both fan-like leaves and toothed (not spiny) leaf stalk margins. *T. martianus* has smooth bark with fibrous leaf scars restricted to just below the leaves. *T. takil* has fibres closely pressed to the trunk. *T. wagnerianus* has smaller leaves (<45 cm), fibres closely attached to trunk and white flowers.

Why is it weedy?

Large and long-lived tree. Hardy, fast-growing and produces prolific seed. Tolerates hot to cool climates, moderate shade and poor soils.

How does it spread?

Seeds are dispersed by birds and gravity.

What damage does it do?

Forms tall stands along bush margins or in disturbed forest, competing with native plants for space, light, water and nutrients.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Disturbed forest, forest and shrubland margins, river and stream edges, wetlands and offshore islands in warmer climates.

What can I do to get rid of it?

1. Dig out seedlings and small plants: Dispose at landfill, all year round.
2. Cut and paint stem: Cut down and swab the stump with glyphosate (200ml/1L). Dispose of trunk at landfill (felled trunks can resprout), all year round.
3. Stem inject: Use a coarse syringe to jab the stem every 20 cm around the trunk. Inject 20ml glyphosate (undiluted) per jab, into the pithy layer, all year round.

What can I do to stop it coming back?

Monitor the site and treat any regrowth or seedlings. If possible, search for and eliminate the source of the infestation. Plant local native trees and shrubs to produce dense shade.



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Photo: Carolyn Lewis



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