

Phoenix palm

Phoenix canariensis

Family

Areaceae (palm)

Also known as

Canary Island date palm

Where is it originally from?

Canary Islands

What does it look like?

Large palm (<18 m tall) with single, thick, non-branching trunk (1.2 m diameter) with a diamond-shaped pattern from old leaf scars and large crown of foliage at the top of the trunk. Long, stiff leaves (<1.8 m) are made up of many leaflets that are dark green, lance-shaped and pointed (30-45 cm long), and the leaf stalk is covered with sharp, shiny green spines (5-8 cm) with a feathery appearance. Branched clusters of creamy yellow-white flowers open from a husk-like structure (Oct-Nov) on a long stem amongst the leaves, and are followed by fleshy, date-like fruit (1-5 cm long), ripening from orange-yellow to dark purple in summer.

Why is it weedy?

Thrives in a variety of habitats and soil types, tolerating cold and warmth, drought and floods, shade and sun, and salt spray as well as mountain climates. Sharp spines can cause injury to humans and animals.

How does it spread?

Seed is spread by birds and water.

What damage does it do?

Displaces native trees through sheer size, and the growth of seedlings can produce an impenetrable, long-lived subcanopy. Reduces water tables and can alter dune form through sand build up around its roots and resulting erosion elsewhere.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Sandy soils and other coastal sites, islands, urban areas, and water courses

What can I do to get rid of it?

1. Dig out seedlings and small plants (all year round): dispose of material at a refuse transfer station.
2. Drill and inject (all year round): drill holes at least 2.5 cm deep every 10 cm around trunk, near the ground, and inject each with 10 ml glyphosate (undiluted).
3. Cut and paint stumps (all year round): glyphosate (250ml/L). Leaves can be mulched, but dispose of trunk at refuse transfer station.
4. Overall spray (spring-summer): spray new growth with glyphosate (20ml/L + penetrant).

CAUTION: When using any herbicide or pesticide, PLEASE READ THE LABEL THOROUGHLY to ensure that all instructions and directions for the purchase, use and storage of the product, are followed and adhered to.

What can I do to stop it coming back?

Retreat any survivors after 1-2 months. Monitor the site for reinfestation or germination of seed bank. If possible track down and remove the seed source.



www.weedbusters.org.nz



Photo: Trevor James



Photo: Trevor James



Photo: Carolyn Lewis