



Alexandria Cycad
Encephalartos arenarius

Height: 6 feet

Spread: 10 feet

Sunlight:

Hardiness Zone: 9b

Other Names: Dune Cycad

Description:

A fairly fast growing, medium sized cycad with spiny, green to blue leaves that emerge upright, then relax outward; develops a short trunk over a long period; an attractive foreground landscape accent; must be well drained; tolerant of light frost

Ornamental Features

Alexandria Cycad is primarily grown for its highly ornamental fruit. The light green fruits with creamy white overtones and which fade to tan over time are held in abundance in spectacular cones from early spring to early summer. It has attractive powder blue-variegated green foliage with hints of silver which emerges lime green in spring. The large spiny narrow pinnately compound leaves are highly ornamental and remain green throughout the winter. The rough bark and dark brown branches add an interesting dimension to the landscape.

Landscape Attributes

Alexandria Cycad is a spreading evergreen shrub with a shapely form and gracefully arching branches. Its relatively fine texture sets it apart from other landscape plants with less refined foliage.



Alexandria Cycad
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder



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Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

This is a relatively low maintenance shrub, and should never be pruned except to remove any dieback, as it tends not to take pruning well. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Spiny

Alexandria Cycad is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Rock/Alpine Gardens
- General Garden Use
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Alexandria Cycad will grow to be about 6 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 10 feet. It has a low canopy with a typical clearance of 2 feet from the ground, and is suitable for planting under power lines. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for 70 years or more. This is a dioecious species, meaning that individual plants are either male or female. Only the females will produce fruit, and a male variety of the same species is required nearby as a pollinator.

This shrub does best in full sun to partial shade. It prefers dry to average moisture levels with very well-drained soil, and will often die in standing water. It is considered to be drought-tolerant, and thus makes an ideal choice for xeriscaping or the moisture-conserving landscape. It is particular about its soil conditions, with a strong preference for sandy, alkaline soils. It is quite intolerant of urban pollution, therefore inner city or urban streetside plantings are best avoided. This species is not originally from North America. It can be propagated by division.

Alexandria Cycad makes a fine choice for the outdoor landscape, but it is also well-suited for use in outdoor pots and containers. Because of its height, it is often used as a 'thriller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the center of the pot, surrounded by smaller plants and those that spill over the edges. It is even sizeable enough that it can be grown alone in a suitable container. Note that when grown in a container, it may not perform exactly as indicated on the tag - this is to be expected. Also note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.



Alexandria Cycad fruit
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder