



**Poor Man's Cycad**  
*Encephalartos villosus*

Height: 7 feet

Spread: 12 feet

Sunlight:

Hardiness Zone: 9b

**Description:**

A fast and easy to grow, medium sized cycad with long, green leaves that emerge upright, then relax outward from an underground stem; an attractive landscape accent; adaptable and water tolerant, but must be well drained

**Ornamental Features**

Poor Man's Cycad is primarily grown for its highly ornamental fruit. The gold fruits with grayish green overtones are held in abundance in spectacular cones from early spring to mid fall. It has attractive bluish-green foliage with hints of powder blue. The large glossy narrow pinnately compound leaves are highly ornamental and remain bluish-green throughout the winter.

**Landscape Attributes**

Poor Man's 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.

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

Poor Man's Cycad is recommended for the following landscape applications;



*Poor Man's Cycad*  
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder



*Poor Man's Cycad*  
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- Accent
- Rock/Alpine Gardens
- General Garden Use
- Container Planting

### Planting & Growing

Poor Man's Cycad will grow to be about 7 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 12 feet. It has a low canopy with a typical clearance of 1 foot from the ground, and is suitable for planting under power lines. It grows at a fast rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live to a ripe old age of 100 years or more; think of this as a heritage shrub for future generations! 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 does best in average to evenly moist conditions, but will not tolerate standing water. It is not particular as to soil pH, but grows best in rich 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.

Poor Man's 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.



*Poor Man's Cycad flowers*  
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder