

Washingtonia filifera

Palmae

California, Arizona

Eng: *Desert fan palm, Petticoat palm*

Ecology: This palm occurs along streams and canyons and near water sources in more open areas of southern California, western Arizona and in Baja California. The very closely related *W. robusta* is found into Mexico. Both are excellent ornamentals for city avenues and have been widely planted in the drier tropics and sub-tropics. In Eritrea, solitary palms have been planted in Asmara.

Uses: **Ornamental.**

Description: A striking robust fan palm to 25 m. The crown of young foliage has a **permanent and conspicuous "petticoat" of dead, withered leaves** which only fall after many years. The trunk is up to 1 m in diameter, but usually much less, ringed with close leaf scars; sometimes swollen at the base. **BARK:** Dark grey. **LEAVES:** **Grey-green, fan-shaped, very large, 2 m across.** The blade is divided irregularly into 5 or more sections to about one-third of its length, the single-fold segments with strong midribs below. **The segments are divided into two at the tip, splitting off thread-like fibres** (filifera) and hanging down when mature. **FLOWERS:** Develop **on many-branched stalks between the leaves, as long as or longer than the leaves.** The white flowers are spirally arranged and single, each with 3 unusually large straw-like sepals. **FRUIT:** **Dark brown-black, 1.5 cm, oval, smooth, often falling with the split calyx attached and the style still on the tip.** Fruit contain **one shiny brown seed.**

Propagation: Seedlings.

Seed:

treatment:

Storage

Management: Grows quite quickly. Germination may be rather slow.

Remarks: One of the easiest palm trees to propagate from seed. They will grow well in any warm climate but prefer dry-to-humid conditions and only produce seed under optimum conditions.

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