

Madagascar Palm Care from BonsaiOutlet.com

General Information:

The Madagascar Palm – *Pachypodium lamerii* – is an exotic succulent related to plumerias. Its trunk is covered with shiny silver pointy hard needles that look like thorns. Narrow green leaves are collected at the top of the trunk – like a palm tree – hence the nickname. It is native to the island of Madagascar and likes warm conditions. The Madagascar Palm will branch if you cut its top off. New growth will come from the sides. A lightly fragrant flower may appear on mature plants grown outside.

Location:

The Madagascar Palm is sun-loving and easily grown. It can take full sun in many places, is drought-resistant, and is suitable for xeriscaping in warm climates though not in full sun when temperatures soar above 100° F. The Madagascar Palm needs to be kept slightly moist as it loses leaves if it gets too dry. All parts of the plant are poisonous if ingested. The use of a humidity tray will keep moisture levels up. These shallow trays filled with small stones have water in the bottom of the tray. Make sure the water does not reach the bottom of the bonsai pot. As the water evaporates, it creates a moister environment.

Watering:

The more sunlight and warmth your bonsai receives the more often it will need water. The Madagascar Palm will lose its leaves if allowed to dry out completely. More bonsai die due to improper watering than any other cause. Do not water the tree if the soil is damp or cool. Bonsai generally need to be watered every couple of days, but there is no set schedule. When the topsoil feels dry, water thoroughly and deeply. An old Bonsai watering trick is to place the entire pot in a sink of water an inch or two deep. Let the water absorb from the holes in the bottom of the pot. An inexpensive moisture meter takes the guesswork out of watering. We sell them on our website.

Fertilizing:

Fertilizing a bonsai is essential to its health because nutrients in the soil are washed away with each watering. Fertilizer is like vitamins and minerals for a plant. When new growth appears in the spring, it's time to start feeding your bonsai. Most bonsai should be fertilized once or twice per month during the growing season and once a month in the winter. Water your tree BEFORE fertilizing. DO NOT FERTILIZE A WEAK OR FRESHLY REPOTTED TREE! This will cause stress to the tree by burning the roots.

Pruning:

Branching in the Madagascar Palm can be stimulated by cutting off its top. The trunk is generally solitary and stout.

Repotting:

Repot the Madagascar Palm when fully root bound only. Repotting is necessary periodically to supply the plant with fresh soil. Prune roots moderately. After repotting, water thoroughly. DO NOT FERTILIZE FOR 3-4 WEEKS. Be careful when handling this plant as the spines are very sharp and sturdy.

Insects and Diseases:

Mites or white fly larvae may attach themselves to the underside of palm fronds. These can be attacked with the use of insecticides and fungicides in the form of sprays, soapy rinses, or systemic poisons. Spraying your Bonsai once every few months with a non-toxic insect spray is recommended. Soaps should be rinsed off the next day. DO NOT SPRAY WHEN SOIL IS DRY.

Mites are small moving pinpoints of red or brown. Severe infestations leave "spider webs" on the underside of the fronds.

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