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Mexican Cotton Palm

Washingtonia robusta

The American President's Palm

Worth Knowing: The Mexican Cotton Palm grows very fast and upright with a lovely slender silhouette. Most typical are the circular brown coat of hair at the transition from the leaf stalk to the leaf blade, and the white fibres that come off the leaf divisions. The big, shining green fan leaves sitting on the reddish-brown and prickly leaf stalks. Dried leaves will cover the trunk over time and protect it from fire in its natural habitat. That also gave the Washingtonia the name Petticoat Palm.

Natural Location: Its natural habitat is the South of the Baja California Peninsula in Mexico. But the Washingtonia robusta is also the most planted palm tree in South California, Texas, Phoenix and Tucson.

Cultivation: Seed propagation indoors is possible throughout the year. To increase its germinability, you can slightly roughen the seed with a piece of sandpaper and place it in warm water overnight for priming. Plant the seeds about 0,5 cm deep in moist potting compost and cover the seed container with clear film. Don't forget to make some holes in the clear film and take it every second or third day completely off for about 2 hours. That way you avoid mold formation on your potting compost. Place the seed container somewhere bright and warm with a temperature between 20°C and 25°C and keep the earth moist, but not wet. Now you might need some patience with the germination; it usually takes about 8 to 16 weeks.

Place: The Petticoat Palm likes a warm and sunny place with temperatures between 20° and 25° Celsius. From April until October it may also be kept outdoors on the porch, balcony or in your garden. Before you move your plant outside during spring, you should keep it initially in a half-shaded place for two weeks, so it can slowly adjust to the UV radiation and doesn't burn its leaves so short after the darker winter months.

Care: Plant your Mexican Cotton Palm in a taller pot or tub right from the beginning, so the deep reaching taproots have enough space, and repot every two years into a bigger and taller container. Water the plant generously and penetratingly, but see that you avoid waterlogging, especially in the saucer. The earth may be dry on the surface between the waterings, but underneath the soil should always be moist. During the growth period from April to October, you can give fluid fertilizer for palm trees at least every two weeks.

During the winter: The Petticoat Palm might resist light frost for a short time, but it is best during hibernation to keep it in a bright spot with a temperature between 5° and 10° Celsius. It can also be kept in a warm room during the winter, while for that you need to spray the leaves of your plant regularly with lime-deficient water to avoid pest infestations. Keep watering the Palm tree with less amounts of water and always wait until the upper layer of the soil has dried before watering again.