

General Information for Planting and Reestablishing Palms



General Overview

Begin with well-hydrated Florida Fancy or Florida #1 palms. [Florida's Grades and Standards](#) states that “the grading process is based on criteria used to evaluate the current health and potential for successful reestablishment.” Providers of plant material share in this responsibility.

There are approximately 2600 species of palms whose needs, habitats, characteristics and attributes vary widely. Here, we focus on the several dozen species frequently used in our landscape industry.

Considerations must be made based on soil types, weather conditions, individual (specific) needs and, sometimes, seasonal constraints. For example, planting marginally cold-hardy species in late fall and during the winter months is a gamble.

There is universal agreement on the importance of tying a palm’s canopy for transport and handling. After planting, advice varies, but below is a list of common transplanting practices that we follow to ensure successful transplanting under the most common Florida conditions.

Hydration, Planting & Soil Considerations

Adequate hydration is critical. Rainfall or irrigation systems that provide sufficient water for established landscapes do not meet the needs of newly planted palms. A thoughtful watering program for reestablishment is required.

Depending on site conditions, incorporation of soil amendments is generally not necessary nor advisable. If soil compaction is an issue, prepare a site which is wider, not deeper. Planting the palm too deeply to cover adventitious (aerial) roots (Figure 2) is detrimental to the palm’s health. Plant so the root initiation zone matches the level of the surrounding grade.

Organic mulch applied a few inches away from the trunk helps to build soil quality over time. The use of fungicidal drenches is occasionally warranted.

Fertilization Guidance

Fertilizing newly planted palms can do more harm than good. A very light application of palm fertilizer or the use of starter mixes can help to address the issue of poor soils found at planting sites.

Key concerns are burned roots and the suppression of microbials.

Florida Fancy and Florida #1 palms have energy reserves within, and with proper management, will be ready for resumption of a scheduled fertilizer program in three to four months.

Stabilization

Stabilizing palm trunks can be accomplished in a number of ways. This is recommended for taller specimens, especially when personal injury or property damage might occur.

This will also help protect the palm’s trunk, meristem, fronds, and newly developing tender roots from damage.

Step-by-Step Process

- 1) Plant hydrated Florida Fancy or Florida #1 palms as soon as possible.
- 2) Remove any synthetic coverings from the rootball. Small pieces that might be entangled in the roots are not a problem.
- 3) Rest the bottom of the rootball on the firm (undisturbed) bottom of the planting hole.
- 4) Make sure that the root initiation zone (Figure 2) is level with the adjacent soil line.
- 5) Backfill around the margins of the palm's rootball and create a berm (saucer) to hold water while flooding the rootball. The best option is to use a soaker hose, micro jets or other automated options which provide for the slower application of water.
- 6) Water in as you backfill to eliminate air pockets. Water jets (Figure 1) can facilitate this process.
- 7) Stabilize if necessary.
- 8) We recommend that the heads remain tied for 1-2 weeks. This reduces transpiration (moisture loss) and aids the rehydration process.
- 9) Begin irrigation establishment regimen.

Irrigation Establishment

Apply water directly to the rootball for 1–2 weeks (untie canopy).

Thereafter, gradually expand the wetted area around the rootball. Lightly fertilize or drench with starter formulation. Evenly moist soil is most beneficial for root growth. “Field capacity” is the perfect balance of air & water.

Depending on conditions, after the first 2-8 weeks, reduce frequency and expand coverage to reach and eventually exceed the drip line of fronds.

After several months, or following the first complete rainy season, water only during extreme conditions.

Key Takeaways

- Plant a healthy, well-hydrated palm.
- Understand that the planting site, weather, season and other variables determine processes.
- Plant at the correct height, don't assume the palms which you buy (especially containers) are planted correctly.
- Monitor ongoing conditions.
- When seeking advice, validate your sources, including AI
- Practically all organisms are genetically programmed to succeed... given the proper conditions.

