

Christmas Palm

Adonidia merrillii

This palm is known under several common and scientific names. Christmas Palm, Manila Palm and Dwarf Royal are some of the common names and *Veitchia merrillii* is the recently superceded scientific name. The genus is named for Adonis, a figure from Greek mythology. Adonidias are native to the Phillipines and have been very popular in southern Florida for more than fifty years. Their popularity there is due in part to their tolerance of highly alkaline limestone soils. Care should be taken in winter since they are tropical and, therefore, sensitive to frost and freezing temperatures.

Adonidias are often available in clusters of two, three or more planted together. The large, bright red seeds which ripen during fall and winter make this one of the most colorful and attractive palms.



Planting

Adonidias are adaptable to different soils; however, best results can be expected when palms are planted in well-drained, improved soil in sun or partial shade. Potted or field grown specimens should be set in the ground at soil level and mulch should be applied over the root area to keep the soil moist. Palms that are used in open lawn areas should have a three- to four-foot mulched ring left around the base to protect the trunk from possible damage from lawn equipment. Apply **Bio-Tone** to the soil mix when planting to stimulate fast, healthy root growth. Newly planted palms should be watered every third day for about two weeks. Then water weekly until the palm is well established.

Fertilizing

Use **Harrell's 11-4-11 Palm Fertilizer** at a rate of 1 to 3 cups (depending on age) every other month all year long. When palms are not properly fertilized, they often show signs of nutrient deficiencies. Never apply Epsom salts or magnesium sulfate (unless advised by a horticulture professional) as this will simply add to the nutrient deficiency problem. If palms look unhealthy or yellow, bring in a sample, a picture or a description of the problem and we will do our best to diagnose the problem and suggest a solution.

Plant Problems:

Potassium Deficiency

The most common nutritional disorder of palms in Florida, thanks to our sandy soil and high rainfall. The best solution is to fertilize frequently with relatively small amounts of a palm fertilizer that has at least equal amounts of nitrogen and potassium.

Cold Damage

Adonidias can not stand frost or freezing temperatures, but even cool weather over a period of months will cause the new leaves to become distorted and undersized. Brown and black fungal spots will be found on the olderleaves during cool weather and large dead areas on the leaves will be seen after a freeze or frost. A hard freeze that lasts several hours can kill or seriously injure even mature Adonidias.

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