

# Palms

*Palms are classic houseplants and can be very long-lived in the right conditions with proper care. Here are a few popular types.*

## **Neanthe Bella Palm (*Chamaedorea elegans*)**

A "tabletop" palm that only gets a few feet tall. Non-toxic and safe for pets.

**Light:** Medium to bright light, no direct sun. More tolerant of lower light than most palms, they can become spindly if conditions are too dark.

**Water & Fertilizer:** Allow the top of the soil to dry before watering. Can be sensitive to chemicals & minerals in tap water, use filtered water or allow water to sit for 24-48 hours to let chemicals dissipate. Fertilize monthly spring through fall with a balanced fertilizer.

**Pests:** Very susceptible to overwatering, which results in "greying" leaves that pull away from the plant easily. If unsure if you should water, wait another day or two.

Palms are susceptible to spider mites. Mist leaves or set in the shower occasionally-spider mites don't like water. Treat with a miticide quickly if you see spider mites. Scale and whitefly can also be a problem. Accumulation of chemicals in water can cause leaf tip browning.

## **Phoenix Palm, Pygmy Date Palm (*Phoenix roebelenii*)**

Provide humidity with misting or pebble trays-this palm likes higher humidity than most. Dry air can cause leaflet tips to brown and die back.

**Light:** Bright light to full sun.

**Water & Fertilizer:** Allow the top half of the soil to dry before watering, keeping slightly drier in winter. Feed with a weak liquid fertilizer once or twice during the growing season and not at all during the winter. Be aware of potential deficiencies in magnesium, potassium, and manganese, which can cause leaf yellowing and decline. Supplement with these nutrients every few months.

**Pests:** Mites, aphids, mealy bugs, scale, and whitefly. Don't wait to treat once you see pests.

## **Ponytail Palm (*Beaucarnea recurvata*)**

Ponytail "palms" are not in the true palm family, more closely related to dracaenas and aspidistras. They are very long-lived and slow growing. They tolerate being root-bound, though to encourage growth, repot every 2-3 years. They are also completely non-toxic to humans and pets. (A good thing, as the flowing leaves can be very attractive to kitties)

*(continued)*



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# Palms cont.

## Ponytail Palm cont.

**Light:** Full sun to moderate light. Growth is more compact and attractive in higher light levels.

**Water & Fertilizer:** Water when soil is dry a few inches down. The swollen base stores water so it can go quite a while without, but growth and appearance is better when watered adequately. Fertilize once a month in spring & summer.

**Pests:** Few, though mealybugs can be a problem.

## Lady Palm (*Rhapis excelsa*)

Lady palms are long-lived, slow growing and non-toxic, with a somewhat bamboo-like appearance..

**Light:** Bright indirect to moderate light.

**Water & Fertilizer:** Water when soil is dry a few inches down. Can be sensitive to chemicals & minerals in tap water, use filtered water or allow water to sit for 24-48 hours to let chemicals dissipate. Fertilize less than most houseplants, every other month in spring/summer when new growth is visible. Feed a little more frequently if foliage becomes pale.

**Pests:** Spider mites & scale. Mist leaves or set in the shower occasionally- spider mites don't like water. Treat with a miticide quickly if you see spider mites. Scale should be treated with a systemic insecticide. Accumulation of chemicals in water can cause leaf tip browning.

