Long-leaved Cycad

Encephalartos longifolius

Height: 10 feet

Spread: 12 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 9

Other Names: Thunberg Cycad, Long Leafed Cycad



Long-leaved Cycad
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder



Long-leaved Cycad
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Description:

A medium sized, clumping cycad with long, pinnate leaves of powder blue, maturing to shades of green; will develop a trunk over a long period; an attractive accent or container plant; must be well drained and prefers slightly acidic soil

Ornamental Features

Long-leaved Cycad's attractive large spiny narrow pinnately compound leaves emerge buttery yellow in spring, turning powder blue in color with showy bluish-green variegation and tinges of silver the rest of the year on a plant with an arching habit of growth. The dark brown stems can be quite attractive.

Landscape Attributes

Long-leaved Cycad is a spreading evergreen perennial with a shapely form and gracefully arching foliage. Its relatively fine texture sets it apart from other garden plants with less refined foliage.

This is a relatively low maintenance plant, and should never be pruned except to remove any dieback, as it tends not to take pruning well. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Spiny

Long-leaved Cycad is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Rock/Alpine Gardens
- General Garden Use
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Long-leaved Cycad will grow to be about 10 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 12 feet. It has a low canopy with a typical clearance of 1 foot from the ground. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for 70 years or more. As an evegreen perennial, this plant will typically keep its form and foliage year-round.

This plant does best in full sun to partial shade. It prefers dry to average moisture levels with very well-drained soil, and will often die in standing water. It is considered to be drought-tolerant, and thus makes an ideal choice for a low-water garden or xeriscape application. It is not particular as to soil pH, but grows best in rich soils. It is quite intolerant of urban pollution, therefore inner city or urban streetside plantings are best avoided. This species is not originally from North America, and parts of it are known to be toxic to humans and animals, so care should be exercised in planting it around children and pets. It can be propagated by division.

Long-leaved Cycad is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. Because of its height, it is often used as a 'thriller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the center of the pot, surrounded by smaller plants and those that spill over the edges. It is even sizeable enough that it can be grown alone in a suitable container. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.