Zululand Cycad

Encephalartos ferox



Zululand Cycad
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 5 feet

Spread: 12 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 9

Other Names: Holly-leaved Cycad, Maputaland Cycad

Description:

A small to medium cycad with spiny, holly-like, blue-green leaves; will develop a short trunk over a long period; an attractive accent or container plant; prefers arid environments and well drained, deep sandy soil; tolerant of light frost



Zululand Cycad fruit
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Ornamental Features

Zululand Cycad is primarily grown for its highly ornamental fruit. The scarlet fruits which fade to orange over time are held in abundance in spectacular cones from late winter to mid fall. Its attractive large spiny lobed pinnately compound leaves remain bluish-green in color throughout the year. The dark brown stems can be quite attractive.

Landscape Attributes

Zululand 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

Zululand Cycad is recommended for the following landscape applications;

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

Planting & Growing

Zululand Cycad will grow to be about 5 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 slow 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 is a dioecious species, meaning that individual plants are either male or female. Only the females will produce fruit, and a male variety of the same species is required nearby as a pollinator.

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 sandy 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. It can be propagated by division.

Zululand 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.