Modjadji Cycad

Encephalartos transvenosus

Height: 30 feet

Spread: 15 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 9

Description:

A large and fast growing cycad, with long, pinnate leaves of dark green; forms a tall trunk over a long time period, and may produces basal suckers; an impressive large landscape accent; adaptable and water tolerant, but must be well drained



Modjadji Cycad
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder



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Ornamental Features

Modjadji Cycad is primarily grown for its highly ornamental fruit. The gold fruits with brown overtones are held in abundance in spectacular cones from late winter to late summer. It has attractive forest green foliage with lime green undersides which emerges white in spring. The enormous spiny narrow pinnately compound leaves are highly ornamental and remain forest green throughout the winter. The rough bark and brown branches add an interesting dimension to the landscape.

Landscape Attributes

Modjadji Cycad is an open evergreen tree with a strong central leader and a towering form, with a high canopy of foliage concentrated at the top of the plant. Its relatively fine texture sets it apart from other landscape plants with less refined foliage.

This is a relatively low maintenance tree, and should never be pruned except to remove any dieback, as it tends not to take pruning well. It has no significant negative characteristics.

Modjadji Cycad is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Modjadji Cycad will grow to be about 30 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 15 feet. It has a high canopy with a typical clearance of 6 feet from the ground, and should not be planted underneath power lines. As it matures, the lower branches of this tree can be strategically removed to create a high enough canopy to support unobstructed human traffic underneath. It grows at a fast rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live to a ripe old age of 200 years or more; think of this as a heritage tree for future generations! 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 tree does best in full sun to partial shade. It does best in average to evenly moist conditions, but will not tolerate standing water. It may require supplemental watering during periods of drought or extended heat. 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.

Modjadji Cycad is a fine choice for the yard, 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 grown in a container, it may not perform exactly as indicated on the tag - this is to be expected. Also note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.