Bushman's River Cycad

Encephalartos trispinosus



Bushman's River Cycad
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 5 feet

Spread: 7 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 9

Other Names: Smaller Blue South African Cycad

Description:

A small to medium sized cycad with pinnate, blue tinted, gray-green leaves; develops a branched trunk over a long period; an attractive accent or container plant; must have well drained soil; thrives in desert climates; tolerant of light frost

Ornamental Features

Bushman's River Cycad is primarily grown for its highly ornamental fruit. The yellow fruits are held in abundance in spectacular cones from late winter to mid fall. Its attractive large spiny narrow pinnately compound leaves emerge green in spring, turning grayish green in color with hints of steel blue the rest of the year. The brown stems can be quite attractive.



Bushman's River Cycad foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Landscape Attributes

Bushman's River 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

Bushman's River Cycad is recommended for the following landscape applications;

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

Planting & Growing

Bushman's River Cycad will grow to be about 5 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 7 feet. It has a low canopy with a typical clearance of 1 foot from the ground. It grows at a fast rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live to a ripe old age of 100 years or more; think of this as a heritage perennial for future generations! 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 is very adaptable to both dry and moist growing conditions, but will not tolerate any 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. It can be propagated by division.

Bushman's River 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.