



Waxen Cycad

Encephalartos cerinus

Height: 3 feet

Spread: 4 feet

Sunlight: ☐ ☒

Hardiness Zone: 9b

Other Names: Dwarf South African Cycad

Description:

A small cycad with fine, blue-green leaves that are covered by a dense, waxy layer, and held almost vertical to the crown; grows from a single underground stem; an attractive foreground garden accent; must be well drained; tolerant of light frost

Ornamental Features

Waxen Cycad is primarily grown for its highly ornamental fruit. The bluish-green fruits which fade to yellow over time are held in abundance in spectacular cones from mid summer to early winter. It has attractive bluish-green foliage with hints of white. The spiny narrow pinnately compound leaves are highly ornamental and remain bluish-green throughout the winter.

Landscape Attributes

Waxen Cycad is a spreading evergreen shrub with an indistinguished habit of growth. Its relatively fine texture sets it apart from other landscape plants with less refined foliage.

This is a relatively low maintenance shrub, 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

Waxen Cycad is recommended for the following landscape applications;

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



Waxen Cycad
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Planting & Growing

Waxen Cycad will grow to be about 3 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 4 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 for 70 years or more. 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 shrub 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..

Waxen Cycad makes a fine choice for the outdoor landscape, but it is also well-suited for use 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.