



# Gardens & Greens

## Queen Palm Problems

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In the last few years we have experienced a valley wide decline in the health and vigor of Queen Palms. From our observations, we believe this decline is due to the age of the Palms, climatic conditions, water availability, poor fertility, and improper pruning practices.

**Climate** – Queen Palms are indigenous to the tropics of South America. Under normal conditions they tolerate our desert conditions fairly well. They survive in a delicate balance between periods of stress and vigor. Summer and winter are normal times of stress. Fall and especially spring are the times of renewal. A hard summer or winter will use all the stored energy of the Palm and will often severely damage its fronds. Without healthy fronds, it is unable to produce food to replace the lost energy reserves. Failure to replace damaged fronds in fall or spring will probably put the Palm in an energy deficit situation with slow decline or death as the result.

**Fertility** – In order to survive the adverse climate conditions of the desert, Queen Palms must grow vigorously in fall and spring. Keeping adequate essential elements available during these growth periods is important in maintaining Palm health. A Palm fertilizer with micronutrients applied on a monthly basis will assure the availability of these nutrients.

**Water availability** – Most problems with Queen Palms can be attributed to inadequate summer irrigation. Drought conditions during growth periods or periods of high temperature will hasten decline. Queen Palms require consistent, adequate moisture during these periods. Root zones should be kept moist with constant slow drip irrigation during summer months.

**Pruning** – Prune only dead fronds. Pruning live (green) fronds reduces the Palms ability to produce food and supply the necessary energy to survive stress.

Despite the best efforts to provide a good cultural environment for these Palms, severe weather can cause death or decline. Periods of severe heat or cold can upset the balance between stress and recovery causing decline. The less vigorous the Palm is prior to these periods, the more susceptible the Palm is to damage. Proper cultural practices are necessary to aid recovery. The older the Palm the more it is affected by adverse conditions. The consensus among Palm experts is that Queen Palms growing in the Coachella Valley will decline or die after 15 years.