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QUEEN PALM HEALTH

Queen palms have been enjoyed for many years in the Phoenix metro area for quick shade and screening, as well as, the lush tropical accent they add to the landscape. They are planted across the Valley from older historic districts and resorts to new homes being built at the edge of the city. Although queen palms are used in a variety of landscape designs, they tend to be more verdant in semi to full tropical landscapes as this usually assures that they receive the amount of water and fertilizer they require for optimum health.

Queen palms are native to the woodlands of Brazil, often growing along riverbanks, they are regarded as a tropical palm rather than a desert palm, such as Mexican and Calif. Fan Palms. Together with Pygmy Date, Cuban Royal and other palms from more tropical areas, Queens require regular feeding with palm food to ensure maximum health and beauty. A well-formulated palm fertilizer should contain adequate amounts of all the minerals important to the health of tropical palms. These include Nitrogen, Magnesium, Sulfur, Iron, Copper and Manganese.

Queen palms in particular are susceptible to a Manganese deficiency problem known as "Frizzle top". This condition is recognized by the 'frizzled' look of new leaves as they emerge from the crown of the palm. and can then become susceptible to a heart rot fungus known as Phytophthora. If a queen palm's health has declined to this point, treatment is much more difficult and restoring your palm to health is not as certain. At this stage, treatment may also include the application of a fungicide, such as "Copper Bordeaux" to the heart (or Crown) of the palm to eliminate a fungus if it is present.

One of the best ways to ensure your palms have sufficient minerals is to feed with Lutz palm tree fertilizer spikes 2 to 3 times per year. Palm spikes are formulated for a slow application of nutrients over a period of several months and should be placed around the palm tree about 18-24 inches from the trunk and 2-4 inches below soil level. Lutz Maintenance spikes are used for normal feeding, but may be combined with Lutz Manganese spikes to treat "Frizzle top" condition. A quicker response is obtained using a granular palm food and granular Manganese. Granular foods should be applied every 3 months in 4-6 inch holes placed about 18-24 inches from the trunk of the palm. As with palm spikes, the irrigation emitters should be placed well away from the trunk so that they are approximately over the fertilizer that was applied.

Along with proper feeding, correct watering is critical for healthy Queen palms (as well as other tropical palms!) As a rule of thumb, newly planted palms should be watered 3 times a week for the first summer and at a minimum of twice a week in winter. Sufficient water to moisten the entire root ball and 6" of surrounding soil is the correct amount to use each watering period.

Established Queen palms that have been planted 3 to 5 years or more may sometimes not respond to these treatments if the soil ph has become excessively high. Our heavy clay soils in Maricopa County are typically alkaline, but may become more excessive when lime leaches from surrounding concrete, such as walkways, house foundations and walls. Periodic applications to lower the surrounding soil ph allows the palm's roots to chemically bind with the nutrients in the soil and use them to feed the palm. A commercial soil acidifier, such as Alka-Liche, may be used. Depending on the palm's size, the recommended application rate may change.

