

Growing Palms from Seed

Much has been written about growing palm trees from seed and one can find a lot of varying advice on the Internet concerning this subject. The following is the result of reading much of that information, followed by trial and error (lots of error it must be said) in order to give you the best advice I can.

1. First priority, the seed must be fresh – I only sell fresh seed, I know it to be fresh because I have either collected it myself or it has been collected for me.
2. When you receive the seed, clean it of all flesh, as leaving this on will delay germination and may lead to rot.
3. Having cleaned the seed, soak it in tepid water for 2 – 5 days, the larger/drier the seed, the longer the soaking period. Change the water daily or more if it is discoloured.
4. At the last change of water add a copper based fungicide at the recommended strength for seedlings or use Chinosol. (I have used both with equally good results). Good results are also reported for diluted Neem oil.
5. For the sowing medium I use Vermiculite. This should be dampened and I mean dampened (approx 30 – 50 ml (boiling) of water per litre of vermiculite). Place the seed and (cooled off) vermiculite in a Ziplock bag, seal and place somewhere warm and dark, I use the airing cupboard (my wife complains bitterly – so I usually hide the bag somewhere out of reach).
6. Leave it all alone for a week, then regularly check (every few days) for signs of germination.
7. As the seeds germinate, remove them to a gritty, moist peat mix compost in a standard pot. Here I put 10 up to seedlings in a 9cm square pot. Give a light spray and seal in a polythene bag and place somewhere bright but out of direct sunlight. The bag keeps in the moisture without the need for extremes of watering, both of which are fatal for palms – trust me I've done it.
8. The plants can stay in the bag for months, just keep a check to ensure that the compost doesn't dry out, the leaves don't start to overfill the bag or the roots come out of the pot.
9. Once the plants are growing well and this could be 6 – 12 months, pot them individually into a suitable pot size.

Best of luck, remember though at all stages hygiene is the key, once a mould gets hold of your seeds you may as well start over – again I've been there.