

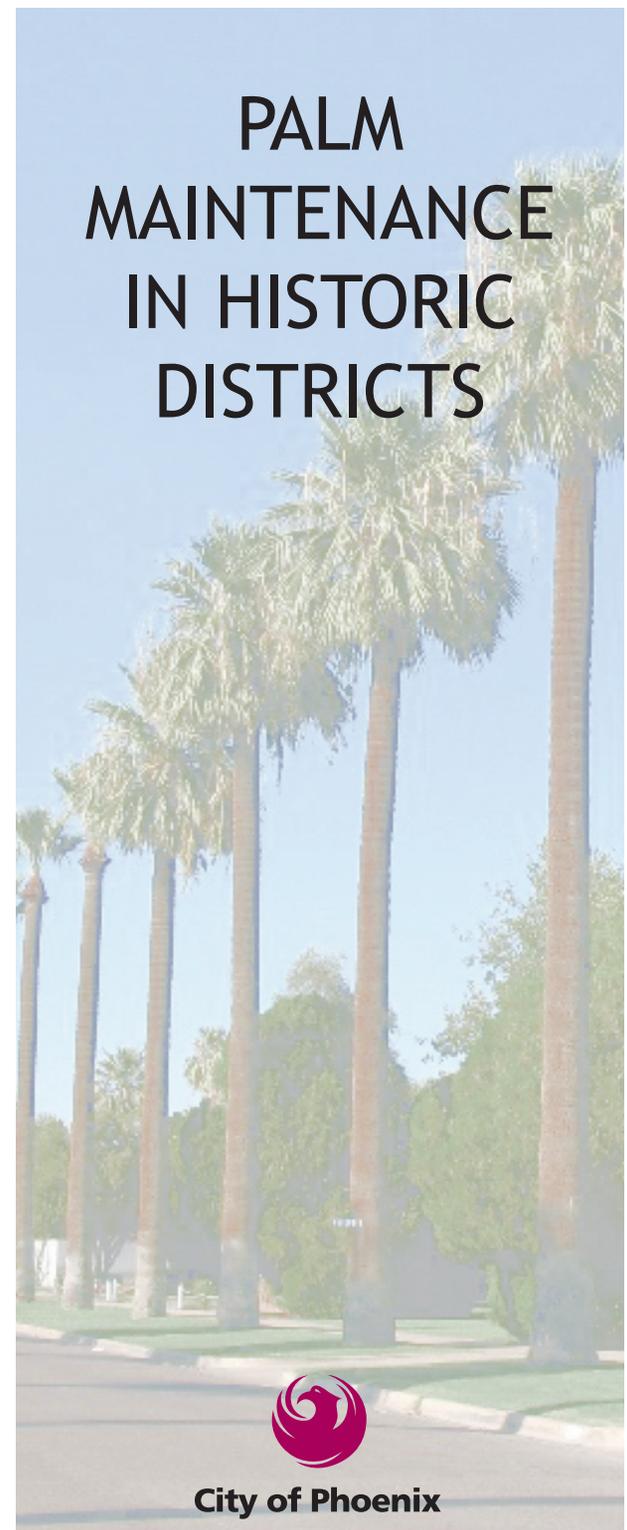


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# PALM MAINTENANCE IN HISTORIC DISTRICTS



City of Phoenix

Palms have been a part of the Phoenix area landscape since the early 1900s. The palm's stately appearance has come to be associated not only with the pioneering history of the area, but a comforting desert oasis feel in the Valley of the Sun. Palms have been planted throughout neighborhoods and business districts by residents and developers, often defining the landscape palette of the surrounding community. In the city's historic districts, they are a character defining feature.



There are four main species of palms found in the street landscapes of Phoenix:

- Two species of fan palms:
  - the California fan palm (*Washingtonia filifera*), and
  - the Mexican fan palm (*Washingtonia robusta*)
- Two species of date palms:
  - the date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*), and
  - the Canary Island date palm (*Phoenix canariensis*).

Although people often refer to palms as “trees,” they technically are not true trees. Palms are considered arborescent monocots, or “tree-like grasses.” Palms differ structurally from trees in the development and organization of growth cells.



Severely over-pruned date palm

While palms located in their natural habitat do not need pruning, palms in an urban environment do require annual maintenance to remove dead fronds and fruit stalks that can become unsightly and potentially hazardous.

Correct pruning is a key component to maintaining palm health. Many people

indiscriminately cut palms to remove nearly all of the fronds. This tendency to over-prune palms is not a recommended practice and can harm the palm's health over time.

Live, green fronds manufacture food for the palm and should be left as long as possible. Palms do not store energy as efficiently as trees and severe pruning can deplete energy resources and stress palm health, causing a gradual decrease in trunk diameter and strength.

The following are nationally accepted arboricultural maintenance standards for pruning palms:

Palm fronds should not be pruned higher than fronds originating at a 45-degree angle from horizontal. This method retains adequate live, green fronds to produce food for the palm while removing brown, dead fronds and fruit stalks. Date palms often are pruned to fronds originating at a 60-degree angle from horizontal to provide a fuller, more tropical look.



Severely over-pruned fan palm

Removing flower stalks prior to the development and set of the palm fruit can save pruning time and money as well as the energy resources of the palm used in forming the fruit. Date palms in Phoenix flower each year in April and May, while fan palms flower in May and June. When planning annual pruning maintenance activities, it is best

to be patient and wait for the flowering cycle to be complete. Otherwise, if pruned too early, additional flower stalks may develop and will hang from the palm head the remainder of the year.



Properly pruned fan palm

As a general rule, plan to begin pruning date palms in late May and fan palms in mid-June. Cut fronds close to the petiole base of the frond (the petiole base is where the palm frond attaches to the trunk of the palm) without damaging the live trunk tissue.

The use of climbing spikes should be minimized. Even though most street landscaped palms can be pruned safely from an aerial lift, some palms still need to be climbed. Palms do not compartmentalize and seal wounds like trees. Injuries to palm trunks are permanent. Retaining the petiole bases or peel on palm trunks helps protect palms from spike injury.



Properly pruned date palm

There are numerous certified landscape and tree contractors that can provide palm pruning services. Information regarding the hiring of local arborists and additional resources concerning the care of palms and trees can be found at the following Web sites:

www.treesaregood.org    isa-arbor.com  
 aztrees.org                treelink.com  
 phoenix.gov/FORESTRY

For additional information, contact the Historic Preservation Office at 602-261-8699 or Parks and Recreation Department at 602-262-6501.

For more information or a copy of this publication in an alternate format, contact Mary Reyna at 602-261-8699/voice or 602-534-5500/city TTY relay.