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Queen Palm Decline



Queen Palms are indigenous to the tropics of South America. The hot dry summers and colder winters of Coachella Valley are not ideal climate for these palms. Queen palms prefer a mild, humid, moist environment. They require a lot of water especially during the summer months. Queen Palms have always struggled to survive in desert landscapes.

A Queen Palm's ability to tolerate stress decreases as the palm matures. Historically, in the Coachella Valley, the average life expectancy for a Queen Palm is 15 to 20 years. During the last 2 summers significantly less irrigation was applied to the landscape due to mandated drought restrictions. This decrease in water significantly accelerated the decline of already stressed palms. These mature palms rarely recover once they begin to decline.

In the future Queen Palms should only be used in landscapes where specific tropical micro climates can be created that would support their needs. Queen Palms should not be planted in common desert landscapes. Where mature Queen Palms occur in existing landscapes plans should be considered for the removal of these palms as they inevitably decline.

Recommendations:

Vintage can provide quotes for removal and replacement depending on the specific location. Palm specific fertilizer and nutrient treatment can be helpful at improving the life of a queen palm. Most palms that have not had new frond growth or the new fronds are distorted and frizzled (as shown in photos) may not respond to these treatments. Palms which have 2 to 3 remaining fronds will likely take a couple of seasons for milder summer temperatures to establish 6 to 8 healthy fronds and an attractive appearance.