

Tale From The Garden!

Palms plants are synonymous with exotic locations and holidays away on gorgeous sunny beaches. However, there are many hardy palm trees available which are ideal for the UK's temperate climate. This means that you can easily grow these exotic looking specimens in your own garden, enabling you to bring a bit of holiday luxury to your own home. One of my neighbours, as you enter The Firs, Tanton Fields, has planted a palm tree in their front garden, certainly brightening up their outlook and creating a slightly exotic ambiance!

One of the best ways to grow outdoor palm trees is in pots, with their slow growth and compact size, making it easy to move them around the garden or patio to green up any spot. Most palm tree plants are hardy down to around -5/6°C and so will survive most British winters – perhaps worth knowing as we are experiencing the return of wintry flurries & snowy showers! Growing them in pots will allow you to move plants into sheltered garages, sheds or greenhouses if you're worried about losing your beloved specimens, and by utilising fleece covers, you can ensure that your palm plants are protected at all times.



Covering the path with cloth or branches was a way to show respect and reverence for great leaders in ancient times. This could be where the custom of rolling out the red carpet came from. Palm fronds are especially important in the Christian world since the Bible tells us that the people waved palm fronds and laid them before Jesus as he returned to Jerusalem. This day has come to be known as Palm Sunday. Many Churches today commemorate Palm Sunday by passing out palm fronds to their congregations. Palm crosses are also part of the celebration because it gives the people a way to recognize both the palm fronds that were used to honour special people and the Christ that we worship.

"Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!'" (Mark 11 v8-10)

Palms can be traced back to Jewish tradition and Christian history. Palms are mentioned several times in the Bible and pertain to significant historical moments. For example, the earliest mention of palms is found in Judges 4 v5, 'Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at the time. She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites came to her to have their disputes decided.'

Deborah conducted court under the shade of palm trees and King Solomon had Palms carved into the temple, adorning the inner and outer walls ('On the walls all round the Temple, in both the inner and outer rooms, he carved cherubim, palm trees and open flowers.' 1 Kings 6 v29). Deuteronomy 34 v3 recognized the city of Jericho for having the finest palm trees.

Palms become significant by the fact that they were a representation of the upright, righteousness, and victory which can be found in the Old Testament. In Leviticus 23 v39-43, after God freed the Israelites from over 400 years of slavery and brought them to the Promised Land, it says:

'So beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the Lord for seven days; the first day is a day of rest, and the eighth day

also is a day of rest. On the first day you are to take choice fruit from the trees, and palm fronds, leafy branches and poplars, and rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days. Celebrate this as a festival to the Lord for seven days each year. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come; celebrate it in the seventh month. Live in booths for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in booths so that your descendants will know that I made the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.'

Other references of palms come in Psalm 92 v12 when it is written 'The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon.'

The background of the palm trees ties the Old Testament and the New Testament together because people had already begun to associate palms with victory. Not only did God's people use them during their festivals, but they had also begun to associate the palms as tokens of joy, triumph, goodness, victory, and steadfastness. So, it was no surprise that when they learned their King of kings was entering town, the people wanted to honour Him.

Jesus entered the city knowing He would be tried and crucified on the cross - only to rise from the grave to conquer sin and death in our place. What the people didn't know at the time, was that it was a procession for a different kind of king - one that would die to save His people and die to pay for the sins of the whole world.

Thousands of years later, palms are handed out at church services to remind us of Jesus' procession to His death, a journey that He willingly made for us. And talking of journeys ... do you know the journey your Palm Cross makes to get to you for Palm Sunday?

The Palm crosses are made in eight villages in the Masasi area of southern Tanzania, these being Mpetta, Namikunda, Mlundelunde, Mumbaka, Machombe, Chirikiti, Makanyama and Marika.

African Palm crosses are made from Dwarf Palms *Hyphaena Coriacea* which grow wild and are not cultivated. Villagers cut the palms in an area near Mbangara where they grow wild, they are then dried and cut into strips before being transported back to the villages, by bicycle or on foot. They are then woven into Palm Crosses and taken to a central collection point which at present is in Mpetta.

The Palm crosses are then taken by road to the nearest port either Mtwara or Dar es Salaam, where they are loaded into containers for shipment to the UK and USA.

By buying African palm crosses we are giving extra work to people whose only other source of income is the sale of their cashew nuts. Any money they earn from palm crosses is used for the usual household necessities – clothes for the parents and their children, salt, soap and any money required to get to the nearest hospital for medical treatment.



This year, when you are handed your Palm Cross, may it be a reminder you can take home & keep throughout the year ahead to remind you of how much Christ loves you.

*No Pain, no Palm;
no Thorns, no Throne;
no Gall, no Glory;
no Cross, no Crown.
It is a season of hope and promise.*