**Livistona chinensis**  
Chinese Fan Palm¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

**INTRODUCTION**

Able to reach 50 feet in height but usually seen at 30 feet with a 10 to 12-foot spread, Chinese Fan Palm has a single straight trunk and large, six-foot-long leaves which have drooping tips (Fig. 1). The divided leaves have long, tapering, ribbon-like segments which gracefully sway beneath the leaves, creating an overall fountain-like effect. The petioles are armed with sharp spines. The inconspicuous flowers are hidden among the leaves and are followed by small, blue-black, olive-like fruits.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Scientific name:** *Livistona chinensis*  
**Pronunciation:** liv-iss-TOE-nuh chih-NEN-sis  
**Common name(s):** Chinese Fan Palm  
**Family:** Arecaceae  
**USDA hardiness zones:** 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)  
**Origin:** not native to North America  
**Uses:** suitable for growing indoors; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance  
**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

**DESCRIPTION**

**Height:** 30 to 50 feet  
**Spread:** 10 to 12 feet

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Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms
Crown shape: palm; upright
Crown density: open
Growth rate: medium
Texture: coarse

Foliage
Leaf arrangement: spiral (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: costapalmate
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: star-shaped
Leaf venation: palmate
Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen; evergreen
Leaf blade length: >36 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower
Flower color: white
Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering; summer flowering

Fruit
Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch; < .5 inch
Fruit covering: fleshy
Fruit color: black; blue
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

Trunk and Branches
Trunk/bark/branches: grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns
Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure
Breakage: resistant
Crown shaft: no
**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

Although Chinese Fan Palm has long been used as a container palm, its neat leaf habit and interesting form make it ideal for further landscape uses, such as in staggered groupings or used as a freestanding specimen, or street tree. They form a closed canopy when planted about ten feet apart along a walk or street. They grow well in confined soil spaces. The palm is self-cleaning of old leaves and will require little or no pruning.

Tolerant of full sun, young specimens of Chinese Fan Palm should be partially shaded. Any reasonably fertile, well-drained soil, including alkaline, is suitable and Chinese Fan Palm should be fertilized two or three times during the year. Plants should be watered during dry spells and will benefit from an organic mulch.

*Livistona chinensis subglobosa* is a dwarf Chinese Fan Palm.

Propagation is by seed.

**Pests**

Scales.

**Diseases**

It is moderately susceptible to lethal yellowing disease.

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**Culture**

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun  
**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline; well-drained  
**Drought tolerance:** moderate  
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** none

**Other**

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem  
**Winter interest:** no special winter interest  
**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding  
**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time  
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** not known to be susceptible  
**Pest resistance:** very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect tree health or aesthetics

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**Figure 3.** Foliage of Chinese Fan Palm.