

Garden Highlights – March



Trachycarpus fortunei

Windmill Palm

Areaceae family

Native to China

If you've ever walked the pathway between Hunthausen and Lynn building, you may have been surprised to see a group of 5 palm trees standing like a mirage in our mild, humid climate. Well, this palm tree, known by its common name as the Windmill Palm, has adapted to grow quite well in climates similar to ours. Native to the south of China, the *Trachycarpus fortunei* is unique because out of thousands of species of palms, it is one of the few that can withstand the rainy, temperate climate of the Northwest.

The Windmill Palm has light to dark green palmate leaves and in the right conditions it can reach a height of 40' or more with a trunk about a foot thick. The leaves are connected by thin 3' long flattened stems that have finely toothed ridges along both edges. The leaves form a circular, fan-like shape and are very stiff (hence the name). Occasionally you will see older, less utilized leaves develop droopy brown tips, which angle towards the ground. The palms on campus are in great condition and seem to be enjoying their environment very much.



Unlike the Date or Coconut Palms, this palm tree makes no useable fruit, but that does not mean it is considered a useless tree. Besides having the enjoyable trait of taking our minds to an urban oasis, if you take a close look at the trunk, you will see a brown fiber which can be made into cordage, doormats, and brushes among other things. In the late winter, you might notice bright yellow flowers beginning to burst out of packet-like buds in near the crown. And notice the differing characteristics between the sexes; females make clusters of grapelike berries. Palms have been used to symbolize victory, honor, respect and welcoming, and a laid back lifestyle, among other things. The palms' rich symbolism as well as their unique structure is what makes us so fortunate to have such exotic, refreshing and beautiful trees on campus.