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GROWING TIPS

Planting or Re-potting Palms with Sensitive Roots

Many Palms have extremely sensitive or weak root systems and can be severely damaged by merely yanking or even pulling them out of the pot or exposing the roots to air, sun or ultraviolet light. In some cases the root system is so weak it cannot support the weight of the root ball when lifted by its stem (trunk). When lifted by its trunk or stem the root ball itself could break, fall apart or the weight of the root ball cracks or breaks some of the main roots. If this happens a slow but usually certain death awaits, taking from a few days to a few months. This usually occurs in larger palms (larger than 7 gallons) whose root balls are very heavy. However, there are a few palms so sensitive that even in tiny 4 inch pots the following procedures should be followed.

In these cases special care must be taken so that the palm is lifted by its root ball or container. A few of the palms in this category that are extremely sensitive are Pigafetta, Borassus, and many if not all, albeit to a lesser degree, the Copernicia species.

The way we handle these species is to place a piece of burlap sufficiently large enough so that when the container containing the palm is centered on the burlap the sides of the burlap can be lifted to reach the top of the pot. (Any natural material can be substituted for the burlap i.e. cotton or anything that rots) In fact for 4" pots a tissue could be substituted for the burlap.

Center the potted palm on the burlap then with a box cutter cut all around the bottom of the pot from the top of each hole to the top of the next hole until you can remove the entire bottom of the pot. Remove and discard the bottom piece which has been cut free. The bottom of the potted palm should now be the burlap.

Take the box cutter and cut vertically from the bottom of the pot $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way up to the top of the pot.

Now, lifting by the burlap, place the potted palm into the hole you have dug for it, leaving just the top edge of the pot above the soil.

Water every day for two weeks. Then in one month, in some cases more, come back to the palm and gently wiggle and lift the pot (only the pot not the plant) out of the hole and discard the pot. Water every day for one week.

By doing it this way, the palm should keep on growing and never even realize that it's been transplanted, which will greatly reduce the risk of shock and minimize stress.