

Palm Trimming

By: Melinda Sperl

Trimming palm trees in the Houston area is a tricky business. When fan palms are small it is easy enough but when that same palm is over 50 feet how do you trim it?

Basically all palms are trimmed the same. You trim the dead branches on the bottom as the new growth comes from the top. Remember that these are tropical plants, not trees so you would only trim them in the growing periods, which is in warm months and never in the winter. If you trim them before a freeze you may need to protect it from freezing if possible. Palms also die from the inside so they take a long time to show damage on the outside, so damage done in January you may not notice until June. Some palms grow so fast that within 5 years they are already past your ladder height. Hiring an arborist may be needed for the largest palms as specialized equipment will be needed to get to the fronds. Climbing spikes are not recommended on trees or palms.

Removing the dead branches is only for aesthetics as your palm will grow just fine if you leave dead branches on it. In fact, the old branches become home to a lot of wild animals including bats, which can eat over 1000 mosquitos per hour! That is better than any spray I have ever used.

On fan palms the process of cleaning the trunk of the tree to a smooth surface is called "booting. This is an expensive process and should only be done by a professional as done incorrectly it can cause severe damage to your plant.

Happy Gardening!

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