

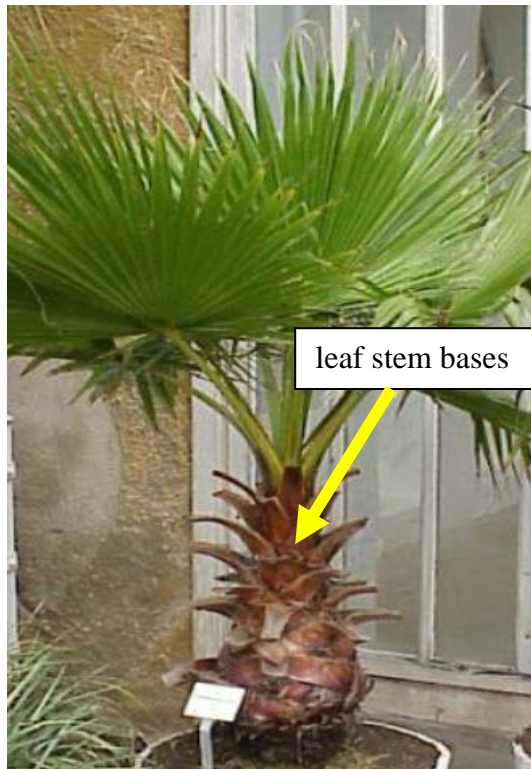
Palm Trees as Fire Hazards

During the 2007 wildfires, it was determined that certain species of palm trees, due to their form or lack of maintenance, were especially hazardous. As a result, the Escondido Fire Department strongly recommends the following for new construction and landscaping:

Palm trees that have fibrous tissue or leaf stem bases along the trunk should be planted and maintained no closer than 30 feet from the tree's drip line to any combustible structure.

- Palm species that have fibrous tissue:
- Chamaerops humilis* (Mediterranean Fan Palm)
 - Phoenix canariensis* (Canary Island Date Palm)
 - P. dactylifera* (Date Palm)
 - P. reclinata* (Senegal Date Palm)
 - P. roebelenii* (Pygmy Date Palm)
 - Trachycarpus fortunei* (Windmill Palm)

- Palm tree that has leaf bases:
- Washingtonia robusta* (Mexican Fan Palm)



All dead palm fronds; including older leaves that persist on the tree, forming a "skirt" of brown thatch, should be removed annually, especially if an existing palm is within 100 feet of any structure or within 30 feet of a driveway or roadway.

Palms that are "skinned" or cleaned of the fibrous tissue or leaf bases annually may be planted as close as 10 feet from the tree's drip line to any portion of a combustible structure.

When an established palm tree already exists closer to a home or other structure than the recommendations above, removal is preferred but if that is not an option, the property owner should:

- Maintain the existing palm by removing dead material and skinning wherever possible
- Maintain combustible vegetation adjacent to or growing along any palm tree by reducing or removing.
- Watch for signs of disease or stress to ensure that the palm is healthy; remove if dead or dying.
 - Fronds should look green and full.
 - Brown fronds or branches at the top center where the new growth emerges indicate a problem that needs attention

Important: The Fire Department also cautions anyone intending to remove the dead skirt from a palm tree to be aware of the dangers of suffocation while doing so; specially trained professionals should be contracted for this type of work.



← A palm tree that is not maintained can explode into a giant torch

Flying embers can embed themselves into the fibrous tissue or leaf bases along the trunk of a palm tree. The rest of the tree can quickly become consumed by fire; anything combustible in the immediate area is at risk. →



← Once ignited, leaf bases and dried fronds can detach from the trunk and be carried on the wind for great distances.

For video footage of a burning palm tree, go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=705dEbBMAAK>