



## Topic: Foxtail Palm and Iron Deficiency

**Question:** We have a foxtail palm about 10 feet tall that was planted in our front yard about two years ago. The palm is planted in the lower part of the yard. It gets new fronds but they are light green from the time they appear and turn yellow soon after. I don't think we're using the right fertilizer and my husband thinks it may be getting too much water being in the lower part of the yard. Could you give me any advice on making it healthier?

Bonnie, Cape Coral

**Answer:** The symptoms you've described are those of iron deficiency. The deficiency typically occurs in palms planted too deeply or those in poorly aerated soils caused by compaction or water saturation. Iron deficiency can also be caused by high soil pH. This is just one of several common nutrient deficiencies that take place in foxtail palms; manganese potassium and boron deficiencies are the others. Foxtail palm is at or near the top of the list of nutritionally demanding palms. Despite this there is no specificity regarding a fertilizer program for control of nutrient deficiencies in foxtail palms. However, it is recommended that the palm be fertilized with the recommended 8-2-12-4Mg palm fertilizer that includes iron. If the iron deficiency persists, that individual will require supplemental applications of an iron fertilizer. Chelated iron fertilizers, in which the iron is combined with a chemical called a chelate that helps to keep the iron in a plant available form, are the most appropriate for application to the soil. Finally excess ammonium, phosphate, manganese, zinc, copper, and other heavy metals often results in iron deficiency in palms. You may want to consider having your soil tested for its pH level at the Extension office.

Stephen Brown is a horticulture agent with the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the horticulture desk at 533-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. or by [brownsh@leegov.com](mailto:brownsh@leegov.com).  
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### Useful Links

[Nutrition and Fertilization of Palms](#)

[Stephen's Webpage](#)