

# The Screw-Pine

IT'S NOT A PINE, IT'S NOT A PALM!

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VENICE GULF COAST LIVING MAGAZINE



If you live in Florida, you might know about the Screw-Pine, which looks like a palm but is neither a pine nor a palm. Native to Madagascar and also known as the *Pandanus utilis*, this exotic plant gets its name from the long leaves that swirl around its stems in a spiral pattern, its showy leaves, and its fruit that resembles a pineapple. It also has some very interesting stilt-like, support roots that might make you look twice at this tree!

A salt-and-drought-tolerant tree when mature that is able to withstand strong winds, it is often seen planted along coastal areas stabilizing the soil and helping to stop erosion. It is slated for Zone 10 or 11 and can grow to 35 feet.



The female plant produces an oval-shaped, hard outer shell fruit. Inside, the white, slightly sweet flesh surrounds a large seed. It is said that the soft fingers of the fruit are edible raw, but the tougher ones need to be cooked; however, for some, it holds a reputation of not being that flavorful. When planted in the spring, the fruit can be picked throughout the year, with summer being the height of its season offering the most fruit. The Screw-Pine prefers full sun but can tolerate some shade.

Its leaves have many uses. In some cultures, they are used for thatching roofs and making baskets, hats, mats, and ropes. But the Screw-Pine's mainstay is providing beauty in a garden where it has room to grow and being a stand-out tree among most tropical landscaping designs.

Because of the razor-like edges on its leaves, it is best not to plant the Screw-Pine near walkways, driveways, or locations where pets and children could be at play. It can even be planted

in a pot. If you choose to use a container, make sure to water it regularly and deeply, especially during the height of the summer. Your pot should have drainage holes to ensure the excess water releases properly and does not damage the roots. It should never be allowed to be dried out completely. You can expect the tree to grow slowly to moderately depending on the fertilization and how much water the tree receives. It also needs full light. If cared for properly it can live up to 15 years.

If you like the idea of an exotic landscape or a touch of the unusual in the home, the Screw-Pine will fit in beautifully!

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