

# Dates



## Occurrence

The area of origin of the date palm extends from the Afro-Asian dry zone of Morocco to Pakistan. Date palms prefer an arid climate and well-drained soils.

## Significance

The “bread of the desert” is a staple food in the Orient with a long history: date palms have been cultivated for about 6,000 years and are a central component of oriental cuisine.

## Threats

The date palm is not an endangered species. However, traditional growing areas such as Morocco with its desert-like landscape are affected by increasing desertification due to climate change. Planting date palms can stop this process so that the soil can remain fertile.

## At ForestFinance

The date palms are planted on pre-arranged areas in the province of Errachidia in eastern Morocco near the Algerian border.



max. 20 metres



max. 1.4 metres

## Date palm

FAMILY ARECACEAE

GENUS PHOENIX

SPECIES PHOENIX DACTYLIFERA

## Characteristics

### Leaves

*The date palm fronds are 3-5 metres long and have 150 feathers. The 30 cm long green feathers are often used for weaving baskets and mats.*

### Bark

*The trunk is knot-free, the fronds only start above the trunk. The bark consists of the spines of the not yet fully grown fronds.*

### Fruits

*The stone fruits are yellow-greenish and 3-5 cm long, depending on the type of fruit and ripeness. Their popular pulp, also called mesocarp, can be used in many ways.*

### Flowers

*The yellow-greenish, paniced inflorescences bloom from April to June.*



Photo: Shutterstock, Plamen Galabov

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## *Date varieties*

Over 1,500 varieties of dates are known worldwide. In Errachidia (Morocco) ForestFinance cultivates the varieties Medjool, also known as royal date, Boufeggous and Nejda. The royal date is brown-yellowish and can be eaten freshly picked. After drying it has a brownish colour and a sweet taste



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DENSITY

0.25 g/cm<sup>3</sup>

JANKA HARDNESS

400 lbf

## *Cultivation*



Only female date palms can bear fruit, which is why only female seedlings are grown in tree nurseries. During natural reproduction, about 100 female date palms are pollinated by about 2-3 male ones.

## *Care*

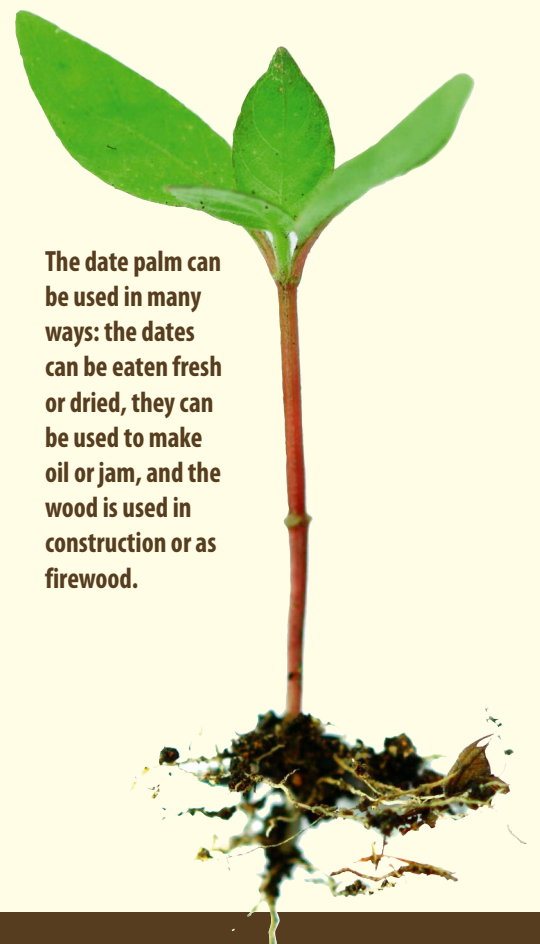


The date palms have to be watered regularly and need a lot of sun. Shortly before the fruit ripens, the overfilled fruit vines are thinned out so that the individual fruits are better ventilated and can grow well.

## *Harvest*



Dates are picked by hand. They are then sorted and washed. The following drying process turns the dates brown and gives them their characteristic wrinkled texture.



The date palm can be used in many ways: the dates can be eaten fresh or dried, they can be used to make oil or jam, and the wood is used in construction or as firewood.