

Beaucarnea recurvata – Ponytail

This is actually a succulent and not a palm like so many people think!

This is a very slow growing South American native that is a sun and heat lover which is perfect as a houseplant, in containers or even in the garden!

It can reach a height of 4.5 – 6m tall outdoors and indoors in containers will generally only grow to about 1m tall.

Beaucarnea has such an interesting trunk (caudex – water storage bulb) which is grey and bulges at the base – this develops very slowly, as it matures it widens and becomes more pronounced and is a definite feature.

The foliage grows from the top of the trunk reaching 60cm long and about 2.5cm wide and curl downward in an attractive manner.

When the plants are mature, outdoor specimens will flower on a long stalk up to 5m long and it produces clusters of small yellowish-beige coloured flowers at the ends in the Summer months – plants are dioecious, and flowers only appear on the female plants.

Do not overwater!!! Only water once every week or two, check if the soil is dry by poking your finger into pot and if the first 5cm is dry, then water.

Fertilise with a liquid cactus fertiliser every 2 -4 weeks in the growing season but only once every 2 months at other times.

Propagation

Pre-treatment – Soak seed overnight in warm water.

Sowing – A good mix that Beaucarnea likes (prefers a gritty seed raising mix)

4 parts sand

2 parts peat moss / coir

1 part sterile soil

1 part perlite

You could also use a good quality cacti or succulent media with added perlite/vermiculite/expanded clay pellets.

Use 7.5cm pots so you don't have to disturb the seedlings for a while.

Fill the pots, moisten media and sow on the surface. Press in lightly and top it off with a little dusting of sand.

Must be kept at a temperature of at least 20°C otherwise seed will not germinate.

Using a heat mat and heating pots from underneath can speed up germination but stop this when germination occurs.

Cover the containers with plastic, mist with water to keep moist but not wet (or grow in an enclosed greenhouse) until germination – remember to remove the plastic once per day to allow excess moisture to escape.

Keep in a well lit area but out of direct sunlight as light is essential for germination.

Germination should occur within 1 – 3 months.

Continue to mist and keep in a bright and warm area.

Once the seedlings have several pairs of true leaves, water deeply but infrequently in Summer, reducing by half in Winter.



WAXING GREEN AND FEEDING SEEDLINGS

