

FEATURED THIS MONTH:

Encephalartos whitelockii

courtesy of Phil & Jessi Bergman

Locality: *Encephalartos whitelockii* is endemic to the southwestern region of Uganda. It grows in rocky hillsides, grasslands and granite cliffs. It can also be found in densely forested areas. The climate is humid and gets regular annual rainfall.

Plant Size: This species grows quite large. Leaves can grow over four meters and the stems can reach heights of five meters plus (over many, many years) and are quite fat. Like many Central African species, *E. whitelockii* tends to be solitary in growth habit, but can occasionally produce basal suckers. Some irregular plants can be prolific in the production of pups, but this is quite unusual.

Other Characteristics: *E. whitelockii* is very large, showy and adaptable. The sheer size of the species makes it impressive, but it is also a rapid grower! *E. whitelockii* tends to be upright in its growth habit, but can take up more space if it's carrying multiple ranks of leaves (this tends to be more common in tropical climates, but can be observed in subtropical climates as well). The leaflets and petiole are armed with sharp spines, but with adequate space this shouldn't be a major concern. Female cones are a bright green and male cones are a similar color.

Culture: This species does well in coastal and inland sun. It can tolerate being grown in less than full sun, but will not grow as quickly. For desert areas, I recommend partial sun or shade. The plant prefers a good draining topsoil that is a bit acidic.

Landscape Usage: In any application, this plant will need some room. They are upright in nature, but they make large trunks and produce very long leaves. They fit well in plantings set back from the foreground. They will get plenty of size to be observed from a distance. They can be planted below larger species (like big palms) to add some interest and beauty, but also are great for blocking out things you don't want to see (like neighbors, tree trunks, a fence, etc.). Another great application is using them as a centerpiece for gardens that don't want overly tall species.



Encephalartos whitelockii
photos by:
Geoff Stein