

Licuala ramsayi var. *ramsayi*

Queensland fan palm

Areaceae

Famous for their broad, photogenic leaves, the majestic Queensland fan palm (*Licuala ramsayi*) is a Daintree Rainforest icon and Australia's only native species of *Licuala*. Endemic to the Wet Tropics region from Cooktown to Ingham, it thrives in lowland rainforests, swamp forests, mangroves, and riverbanks, typically within 20km of the coast and up to 1,100 metres in elevation. These palms have tall, slender trunks that can reach up to 20 metres high and are flexible enough to withstand tropical cyclones.

The most distinctive feature of this palm is its enormous, pleated leaves, appearing circular but made up of 17-23 stiff, radiating wedge-shaped segments that can be over 1.5 m wide with spiny petioles. As the leaves age, they break down into a fibrous mesh that eventually detaches from the plant. The Kuku Yalanji people have traditionally used these for shelter, food wrapping, and thatching.

Flowering occurs at the start of the wet season (November to January), with long, arching inflorescences bearing small, cream-coloured flowers, occurring either alone or in clusters of up to four, that emit an unpleasant scent to attract insect pollinators. Each palm may produce multiple flower spikes at once, stretching up to 3.5 metres long. After pollination, the tree bears clusters of small, ovoid, vibrant orange-red fruits between January and March, a vital food source for cassowaries at a time when few other fruits are available, playing an essential role in rainforest ecology. The fruits contain globular seeds with a distinctive ridge called a raphe, aiding in its identification.

https://www.bushheritage.org.au/species/fan-palms?srsltid=AfmBOooAzN9IUfNQ5NIgJsX9bGbK5lVj_LpLmzGFDFwpumZRIC_LFU6N
https://apps.lucidcentral.org/rainforest/text/entities/licuala_ramsayi_var._ramsayi.htm