PLANT FACT SHEET

# *Rhopalostylis sapida* H. H. Wendl. & Drude

**GENUS** *Rhopalostylis* **FAMILY** Arecaceae

**COMMON NAMES** Nikau palm, Feather duster palm, Nakau, Nika palm, Shaving-brush palm

## EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

**Edible parts:** Cabbage, Flowers, Palm heart, Fruit, Sap

The young unopened flower is cooked and eaten.
The palm heart is eaten.

## DESCRIPTION

An upright palm with bulging crown-shaft. It can be 8-12 m high. The trunk is 10 cm across. It is ringed with the scars of fallen leaves. The crown has 12-16 straight erect leaves. There is a crown-shaft 30 cm long. The leaves and leaflets are stiff and upright. This gives the palm a "feather duster" like appearance. The leaves are 1.5-2 m long. The midrib of the leaf is often slightly twisted. The flower stalk grows below the crown-shaft. It is 25-40 cm long. The flowers are purple to red. The fruit are bright red when ripe. They are 8-12 mm long and 7-8 mm wide.

## HABITAT

It is a warm temperate plant. They grow in moist forests in New Zealand. It grows naturally as far south as 44°S. It can only tolerate light frosts. They will grow in cool climates. It grows from the coast to 700 m altitude. Young palms need protection from the sun for the first 4-5 years. It suits hardiness zones 9-11. In Hobart Botanical Gardens.

## PRODUCTION

### Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. Seed can be slow to germinate.

### Harvesting and Seed Production

Plants respond strongly to fertiliser. Plants are slow growing and do not form a trunk for 15 years. They do not flower for 30 years.

## NOTES

There are 2-3 Rhopalostylis species.

## PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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