

## *Tree Profile: Dwarf Umbrella Tree - Schefflera arboricola*

**General Information:** Dwarf Umbrella Tree is an evergreen shrub with dark green or variegated, glossy, palmate 3 to 7 leaflets densely covering flexible, green stems which gently fan out into a rounded crown. The umbrella plant lends itself easily to the bonsai form and is popular as an indoor bonsai, often variegated with creamy-white to yellow edges or centers.

**Family:** Araliaceae and a native to Taiwan

**Lighting:** Part shade, part sun - it prefers higher light if possible, but can adapt to a wide variety of light levels. The more light, the more compact and the stronger the growth.

**Watering:** Adequate water to keep from drying out. As a tropical plant it likes moisture, but avoid letting the plant sit in water after you water it. It likes to be moist but not wet!

**Feeding:** General purpose fertilizer at one third strength when actively growing.

**Pruning and wiring:** Shaping is done with pruning and pinching the stems, it can handle radical pruning and will come back strongly. Don't be afraid to prune the plant as needed to maintain the size and shape. Style as a broad crowned bonsai with the silhouette of a banyan tree. Other styles are Cascade, Semi-cascade and Root-over-Rock. Wiring not normally necessary, if you do, use raffia to ensure that the bark is not scared by the wire.

Under the right conditions, this plant will produce aerial roots that, when they reach the ground, will convert to fully functional roots. Three conditions must be maintained for the plant to produce them:

- a high growth rate,
- the plant is root bound or these roots are pruned hard and constant,
- very high humidity!

**Defoliating system:** In September defoliate and remove all growing tips and unwanted branches and length of branches. When the new leaves and branches come through, wait for the third leaf to mature and remove the growing tip. Defoliate again in January and keep up removing the growing tips after the third leaf. The only reason the larger leaves come back is if the branches are allowed to grow!

**Propagation:** By cuttings, seed and air layer.

**Repotting:** It needs repotting every two years and may be severely root pruned. Soil should be well drained and slightly alkaline.

**Pests and diseases:** Scale and spider mites when grown indoors, but no diseases of major concern. Use systemic pesticides.

