



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## *Rhapis excelsa*<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

The delicate Lady Palm forms dense clumps of bamboo-like stalks topped with very dark green, broad, fan-shaped leaves (Fig. 1). Performing well in northside foundation plantings or other shady locations, slow-growing Lady Palm is also ideal for containers. They lend a rich tropical look to the landscape. Lady Palms can be effective accents in a shrub border or near an entryway. Plant on three to four foot centers to create a mass effect. Locate them in a low-growing ground cover such as Mondo Grass or Lily-Turf for a dramatic effect. This palm looks wonderful when it is lighted from below, or silhouetted at night.

### General Information

**Scientific name:** *Rhapis excelsa*

**Pronunciation:** RAY-piss eck-SELL-suh

**Common name(s):** Lady Palm

**Family:** *Palmae*

**Plant type:** palm

**USDA hardiness zones:** 8B through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Planting month for zone 8:** year round

**Planting month for zone 9:** year round

**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** screen; border; mass planting; specimen; container or above-ground planter; naturalizing; accent; suitable for growing indoors

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range



Figure 1. Lady Palm.

### Description

**Height:** 6 to 12 feet

**Spread:** 3 to 12 feet

**Plant habit:** palm

**Plant density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** medium

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-501, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October, 1999 Please visit the EDIS Web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Foliage**

- Leaf arrangement:** alternate
- Leaf type:** simple
- Leaf margin:** lobed
- Leaf shape:** fan-shaped
- Leaf venation:** palmate
- Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen
- Leaf blade length:** 8 to 12 inches
- Leaf color:** green
- Fall color:** no fall color change
- Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

- Flower color:** yellow
- Flower characteristic:** pleasant fragrance; spring flowering

**Fruit**

- Fruit shape:** oval
- Fruit length:** 1 to 3 inches
- Fruit cover:** fleshy
- Fruit color:** white

**Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

**Trunk and Branches**

- Trunk/bark/branches:** showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems
- Current year stem/twig color:** not applicable
- Current year stem/twig thickness:** not applicable

**Culture**

- Light requirement:** plant grows in the shade
- Soil tolerances:** alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam
- Drought tolerance:** moderate
- Soil salt tolerances:** poor
- Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

## Other

**Roots:** sprouts from roots or lower trunk

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding plant:** plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

## Use and Management

Lady Palm needs partial to deep shade and fertile organic soil to look its best but will tolerate the poor light, dust, and drought usual of indoor container culture. Be sure that drainage is adequate for indoor use.

Spreading slowly by underground stems, Lady Palm is usually propagated by division. Make more divisions than you need since many canes may not transplant successfully. There are several other species of *Rhapis* for different leaf sizes and shapes.

Pest problems include scale, palm aphids, sooty mold, and caterpillars, although none are usually serious.

### Pests and Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.