



Ravenala madagascariensis Travelers-Tree¹

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INTRODUCTION

Traveler's-Tree is ideal for creating an exotic, tropical effect with its very large, banana-like leaves, each up to nine feet long and held in fan-shaped formation, and the unusual, small, white flowers which are held erect in canoe-shaped bracts (Fig. 1). Leaves are usually seen tattered and torn from exposure to the wind. Traveler's-Tree will reach a height of 30 feet and a spread of 18 feet, growing at a moderate rate. It makes a nice tropical accent in a large landscape, growing too large for most modest-sized yards. The common name is derived from the fact that weary travelers would quench their thirst on the rainwater collected in the enlarged sheaths at the base of the leaves.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Ravenala madagascariensis*

Pronunciation: rav-eh-NAY-luh
mad-uh-gas-kar-ee-EN-sis

Common name(s): Travelers-Tree

Family: *Strelitziaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 10 through 11 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; near a deck or patio; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

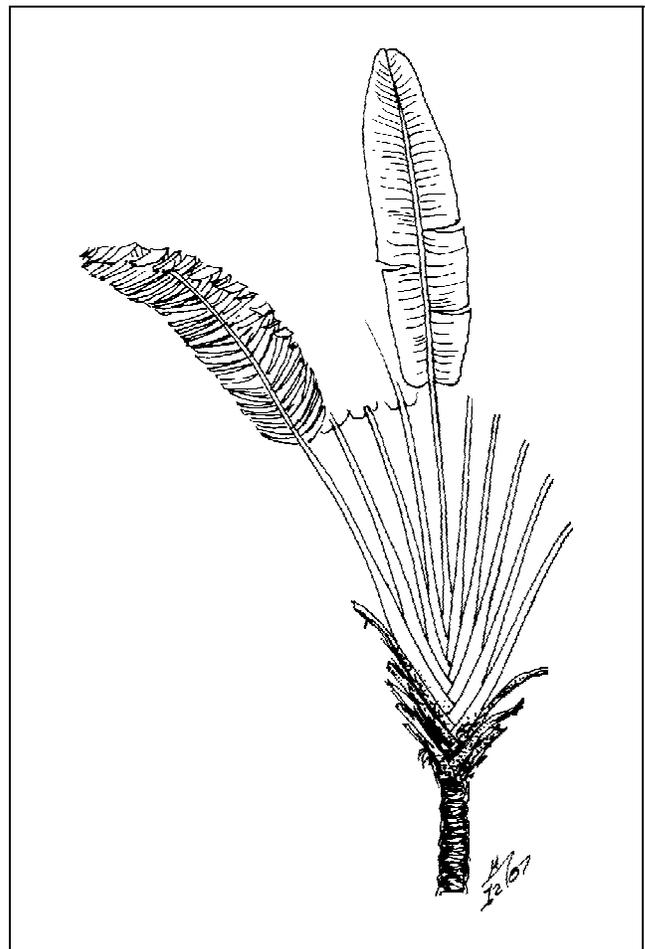


Figure 1. Middle-aged Travelers-Tree.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 15 to 25 feet

Spread: 15 to 18 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Crown shape: palm; upright

Crown density: open

Growth rate: medium

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: oblong

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen;
evergreen

Leaf blade length: >36 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: fall flowering; showy; spring
flowering; summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch; < .5 inch

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife;
inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter
problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: routinely grown with, or
trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow
mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; no
thorns

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop
strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Crown shaft: no

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun;
tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline;
acidic; well-drained

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: none

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect tree health or aesthetics

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Traveler's-Tree will produce best growth in full sun, though small potted plants may be grown in shade for a period of time. Plants should be grown on fertile soils, high in organic matter, and routinely cared for. Plants should be grown only in frost-free locations.

Propagation is by division of basal suckers or by seed, which are slow to germinate.

Pests

No pests are of major concern.

Diseases

Cercospora leaf-spot is a very serious disease problem.