Introduction

Ideally suited to water gardens or poolside plantings, the compact clumps of Dwarf Umbrella Sedge are also attractive in containers or as striking specimen plantings in landscape soil (Fig. 1). They can be spaced 1 to 2 feet apart in a mass planting to create a 2-feet-tall ground cover of fine texture. The small, curving tufts of flower bracts look like leaves and radiate out from the top of the bare, slender, triangular stalks, like the ribs of an umbrella.

General Information

Scientific name: Cyperus albostriatus
Pronunciation: sye-PEER-us al-boe-stree-AY-tus
Common name(s): Dwarf Umbrella Sedge
Family: Cyperaceae
Plant type: herbaceous; ornamental grass
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: container or above-ground planter; naturalizing; border; water garden; accent
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: .5 to 1 feet
Spread: 1 to 2 feet

Foliage

Figure 1. Dwarf Umbrella Sedge.
Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf arrangement: most emerge from the soil, usually without a stem
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: linear
Leaf venation: parallel
Leaf type and persistence: semi-evergreen
Leaf blade length: 8 to 12 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: 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 part shade/part sun
Soil tolerances: slightly alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; extended flooding; loam;
Drought tolerance: moderate
Soil salt tolerances: poor
Plant spacing: 18 to 24 inches
Other

Roots: not applicable
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: aggressive, spreading plant
Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Growing in a wide variety of soils, including standing water, Umbrella Sedge performs well in sun or light shade, and is slightly salt-tolerant. Regular fertilizer applications keep the foliage dark green. Growth is moderate and Umbrella Sedge could eventually take over a small pond, spreading by seed and underground stems, which can be mostly controlled by submerging the plants in pots. They spread slowly in landscape soil.

Bent or brown stalks should be periodically removed and overgrown clumps divided, discarding the matted center part of the plants. This helps keep the plant look clean in the landscape.

The cultivar ‘Gracilis’, Dwarf Umbrella Sedge, is also much smaller than the species. *Cyperus papyrus*, Egyptian papyrus, reaches 6 to 8 feet in height, has finer, almost thread-like “leaves” (which are actually flower bracts) and makes an excellent water garden plant, being found in its native habitat in Africa growing in quietly flowing water up to 3 feet deep.

New plantlets can be propagated by division or by inverting the flower head in a shallow container of water or moist sand.

Umbrella Sedge is occasionally bothered by mites.

Pests and Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.