



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Dizygotheca elegantissima*¹

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Introduction

The lacy juvenile leaves of false aralia are made up of 7 to 10 slender, jagged leaflets arranged like fingers of a hand (Fig. 1). They are coppery in color when they unfold but then become a very dark grey-green. The mature foliage looks entirely different and is heavier with broader leaflets, giving a coarser silhouette. Both types of leaves can be present on the plant at the same time.

General Information

Scientific name: *Dizygotheca elegantissima*

Pronunciation: diz-zee-goe-THEEK-uh el-uh-gan-TISS-sim-uh

Common name(s): False Aralia

Family: *Araliaceae*

Plant type: shrub; tree

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

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; near a deck or patio; suitable for growing indoors; accent

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 6 to 25 feet

Spread: 3 to 15 feet

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: open

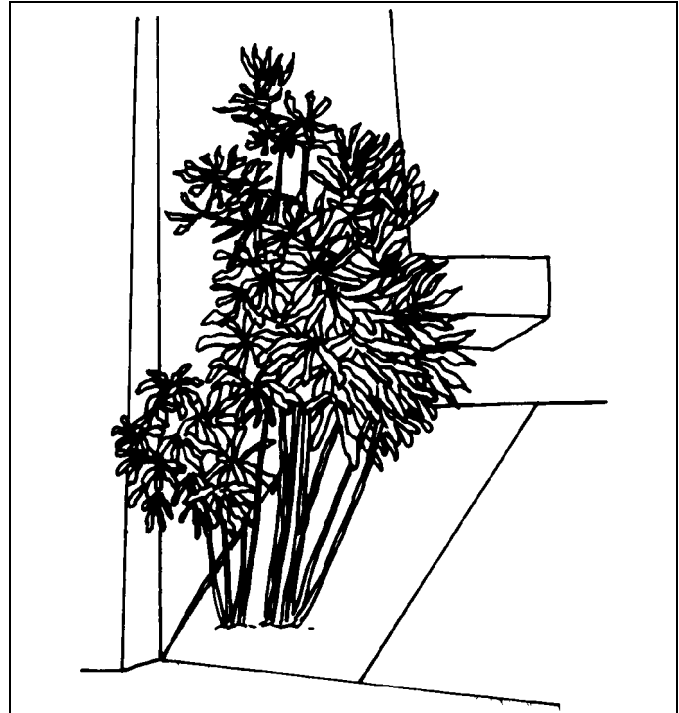


Figure 1. False Aralia.

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: spiral

Leaf type: palmately compound

Leaf margin: lobed; serrate

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-180, 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.

Leaf shape: oblong
Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 8 to 12 inches
Leaf color: purple or red
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white
Flower characteristic: summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown
Fruit length: less than .5 inch
Fruit cover: fleshy
Fruit color: brown
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

Current year stem/twig color: green
Current year stem/twig thickness: thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun; plant grows in the shade
Soil tolerances: slightly alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam
Drought tolerance: high
Soil salt tolerances: poor
Plant spacing: not applicable

Other

Roots: usually not a problem
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

False aralia provides a tropical look as a house plant indoors or in outdoor settings, whether in containers or at entranceways where its distinctive foliage casts interesting shadows on background walls. It can be pruned to develop into a small tree. Due to its upright vertical habit, false aralia is best used as an accent or specimen plant.

This somewhat branched, small evergreen tree will tolerate bright light, performing best in light shade. False aralia needs fertile, well-drained soil and protection from strong winds to develop into a nice specimen.

Propagation is by air-layering, cuttings, or seed.

Nematodes are a problem in the soil, while mites and scale can be serious leaf problems.

Pests and Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.

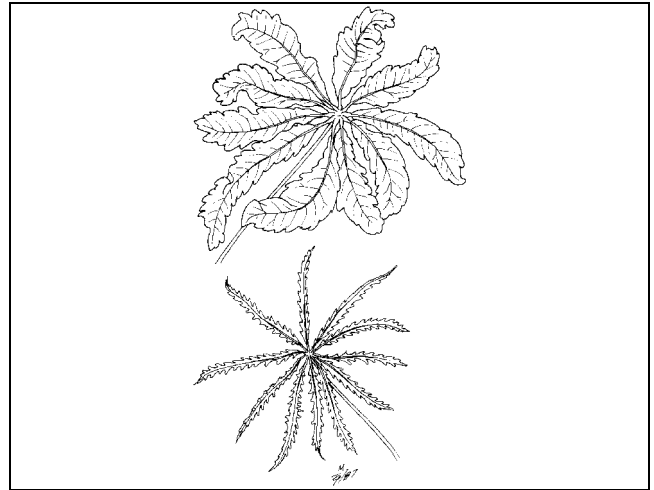


Figure 3. Foliage of False Aralia