Introduction

The beautiful, huge, dark green, deeply-lobed, leathery leaves of Split-Leaf Philodendron almost appear to have been delicately cut with scissors (Fig. 1). These attractive evergreen leaves, up to 36 inches long and wide, are abundantly produced on thickened petioles secured to vigorous vines which quickly climb up any shaded tree trunk, providing the garden with a lush, exotic quality. These vines are capable of reaching 30 feet or more in length but can easily be kept shorter by trimming the terminal new growth. Smaller plants grown in containers on totem poles are quite popular as interior plants.

General Information

Scientific name: Monstera deliciosa
Pronunciation: mawn-STEER-ruh dee-liss-see-OH-suh
Common name(s): Split-Leaf Philodendron, Swiss Cheese Plant
Family: Araceae
Plant type: vine
USDA hardness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round
Origin: native to North America
Uses: container or above-ground planter; culinary
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardness range

Description

Height: depends upon supporting structure
Spread: depends upon supporting structure

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: lobed
Leaf shape: ovate
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 18 to 36 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Trunk/bark/branches: usually with one stem/trunk
Current year stem/twig color: green
Current year stem/twig thickness: very thick

Culture

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

Other

Roots: not applicable
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

October 1999
Use and Management

The bloom of Split-Leaf Philodendron is a 12-inch-long, white, calla-like spadix and it is sometimes followed by the unusual, edible fruit which tastes much like a cross of pineapple and banana. The fruit can take a year or longer to ripen, but only under the exacting conditions of proper warmth, high humidity, and bright light typical of USDA hardiness zone 10.

Split-Leaf Philodendron should only be grown in frost-free areas on rich, moist soil in partial to deep shade. Full sun locations can burn the foliage.

Propagation is by cuttings or air-layering, and seldom by seeds.

Scales, mites, and mealy bugs.

Pests and Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.