Introduction

Balfour Aralia is usually seen in its variegated form of glossy, light green leaves with irregular milk-white markings at its margins (Fig. 1). The stiffly upright growth habit, comprised of many stems, works well as a hedge or screen, or as a specimen. It grows nicely in a container for patio or terrace. The plant may thin out at the bottom as it grows older. Prune several of the older stems to the ground to encourage thicker foliage near the base.

General Information

Scientific name: Polyscias pinnata
Pronunciation: poe-LISS-see-us pin-NAY-tuh
Common name(s): Balfour Aralia
Family: Araliaceae
Plant type: shrub
USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: hedge; specimen; foundation; border; accent; cut foliage/twigs; suitable for growing indoors
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Foliage
Height: 6 to 10 feet
Spread: 2 to 4 feet
Plant habit: round
Plant density: dense

Growth rate: slow
Texture: fine

Foliage
Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: trifoliate
Leaf margin: dentate

Figure 1. Balfour Aralia.
Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Leaf shape:** ovate  
**Leaf venation:** palmate  
**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen  
**Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** no fall color change  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

**Flower color:** white  
**Flower characteristic:** flowers periodically throughout the year

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** unknown  
**Fruit length:** unknown  
**Fruit cover:** unknown  
**Fruit color:** unknown  
**Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; not particularly showy

**Current year stem/twig color:** green  
**Current year stem/twig thickness:** medium

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun; plant grows in the shade  
**Soil tolerances:** occasionally wet; acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam; clay;  
**Drought tolerance:** high  
**Soil salt tolerances:** unknown  
**Plant spacing:** 24 to 36 inches

**Other**

**Roots:** usually not a problem  
**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

Tolerant of salt spray, full sun or deep shade, Balfour Aralia prefers moist, well-drained soil where it can be protected from frost. It grows well as a house plant if not over-watered. Plant on three to four foot centers to form a screen or mass planting. The variegated forms look good as a specimen or as an accent growing in a shrub border.

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

Mites can be a serious foliage problem and plants also need to be checked for scale.

Pests and Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.