1. **Rhapis excelsa**

Edward F. Gilman

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**Introduction**

The delicate Lady Palm forms dense clumps of bamboo-like stalks topped with very dark green, broad, fan-shaped leaves (Fig. 1). Performing well in northside foundation plantings or other shady locations, slow-growing Lady Palm is also ideal for containers. They lend a rich tropical look to the landscape. Lady Palms can be effective accents in a shrub border or near an entryway. Plant on three to four foot centers to create a mass effect. Locate them in a low-growing ground cover such as Mondo Grass or Lily-Turf for a dramatic effect. This palm looks wonderful when it is lighted from below, or silhouetted at night.

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**General Information**

**Scientific name:** *Rhapis excelsa*

**Pronunciation:** RAY-piss eck-SELL-suh

**Common name(s):** Lady Palm

**Family:** Palmae

**Plant type:** palm

**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:** screen; border; mass planting; specimen; container or above-ground planter; naturalizing; accent; suitable for growing indoors

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

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**Description**

**Height:** 6 to 12 feet

**Spread:** 3 to 12 feet

**Plant habit:** palm

**Plant density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** medium

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate  
Leaf type: simple  
Leaf margin: lobed  
Leaf shape: fan-shaped  
Leaf venation: palmate  
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen  
Leaf blade length: 8 to 12 inches  
Leaf color: green  
Fall color: no fall color change  
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: yellow  
Flower characteristic: pleasant fragrance; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval  
Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches  
Fruit cover: fleshy  
Fruit color: white

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: showy; 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 the shade  
Soil tolerances: alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam  
Drought tolerance: moderate  
Soil salt tolerances: poor  
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches
Other

Roots: sprouts from roots or lower trunk
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

Lady Palm needs partial to deep shade and fertile organic soil to look its best but will tolerate the poor light, dust, and drought usual of indoor container culture. Be sure that drainage is adequate for indoor use.

Spreading slowly by underground stems, Lady Palm is usually propagated by division. Make more divisions than you need since many canes may not transplant successfully. There are several other species of *Rhapis* for different leaf sizes and shapes.

Pest problems include scale, palm aphids, sooty mold, and caterpillars, although none are usually serious.

Pests and Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.