



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## *Tetrapanax papyriferus*<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

Used in the Orient to produce rice paper from the stems, this rapidly-growing, large-leaved, evergreen shrub is best used where it can spread freely as a ground cover or grown in a shrubby border (Fig. 1). The lush, felty, palmate leaves, up to 18 inches across, white, fuzzy new growth, and cane-like stems lend a tropical effect wherever this plant is used. Large clusters of creamy white flowers appear in fall.

### General Information

**Scientific name:** *Tetrapanax papyriferus*

**Pronunciation:** tet-TRAP-puh-nacks pap-per-RIFF-fer-us

**Common name(s):** Rice Paper Plant

**Family:** *Araliaceae*

**Plant type:** herbaceous

**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:** naturalizing; border; container or above-ground planter; accent

**Availability:** grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

### Description

**Height:** 8 to 12 feet

**Spread:** 5 to 8 feet

**Plant habit:** round

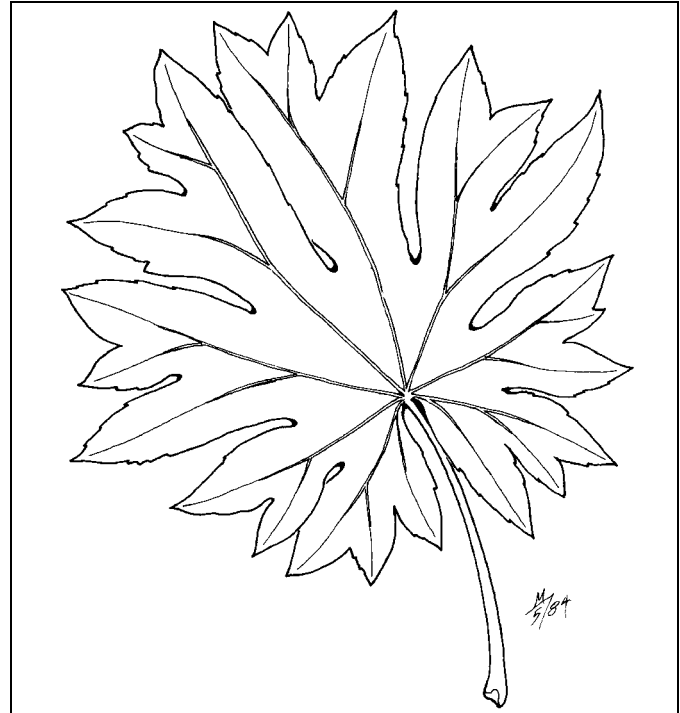


Figure 1. Rice Paper Plant.

**Plant density:** dense

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** coarse

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate

**Leaf type:** simple

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**Figure 2.** Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Leaf margin:** serrate; undulate; parted  
**Leaf shape:** star-shaped  
**Leaf venation:** palmate  
**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen  
**Leaf blade length:** 12 to 18 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** no fall color change  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

**Flower color:** white  
**Flower characteristic:** fall flowering

**Fruit**

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

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems  
**Current year stem/twig color:** brown  
**Current year stem/twig thickness:** very thick

**Culture**

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

**Other**

**Roots:** usually not a problem  
**Winter interest:** no special winter interest  
**Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding  
**Invasive potential:** potentially invasive  
**Pest resistance:** no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

## **Use and Management**

The vigorous suckering habit of rice paper plant is a bit too invasive for some gardeners and is grown in locations where its roots can be easily contained. Thriving in full sun or shade, rice paper plant is not particular as to soil or moisture conditions but for best appearance plants should not be subjected to drought. The soft tender leaves should be protected from strong winds. While easily knocked down by killing frosts, rice paper plant will quickly return in spring in USDA hardiness zones 8 and 9.

Propagation is by seeds, cuttings, or division of the abundant suckers.

Mealy-bugs are the only significant pest problem.

### **Pests and Diseases**

No diseases are of major concern.