

PRODUCTION OF DWARF UMBRELLA TREE



Source: <https://www.architecturelab.net/dwarf-umbrella-care/>

Botanical/scientific name: *Schefflera arboricola*

Family name: Araliaceae

Common names: Umbrella tree

1. What is dwarf umbrella tree

It is an evergreen tree with dark green leaves that fan out into an umbrella form, which makes it ideal for use as a bonsai with a dense canopy. It is commonly called the umbrella tree, because of the way its leaves spread and hang.

2. Description of dwarf umbrella tree

Umbrella trees is a multi-trunk evergreen shrub which has attractive dark green, glossy, palmate leaves densely covering flexible, green stems which gently fan out into a round crown. These beautiful plants can grow around 3 to 4 m tall outdoors so they need to be pruned if it is grown indoors at home. Pruning and topping are essential care practices for umbrella plants.

2.1 Leaves

The leaves are alternate, dark green often variegated cream or yellow, leathery, shiny above, palmate, 4 to 12 leaflets, obovate to elliptic, 110 x 45 mm, margins entire. With a petiole 100 to 150 mm long, petiolules 10 to 30 mm long.

2.2 Flowers

Flowers are yellowish-green, produced in a 20 cm panicle of small umbels, each umbel 7 to 10 mm across with 5 to 10 flowers in autumn and winter.

2.3 Fruit/seeds

The fruit/seeds are drupe, orange turning black, ovoid and about 5 mm long.

3. Cultivars

There are some common varieties of dwarf umbrella plants. There are two most popular varieties of these plants that are commonly grown in homes which are, variegated gold capella and plain green leafed.

- 'Gold Capella'- is variegated pigmentation with creamy white or yellow tinges. Variegated varieties are more delicate and do not grow as tall as the green ones.
- Arboricola – is regular green variety that has more ripple to the leaves, often in a group of five to nine, shiny, long, oval and its tips are pointed, hoisted in a circular fashion above stems.

4. Production areas in South Africa

The dwarf umbrella tree is grown in provinces such as Gauteng, Western Cape, North West, Northern Cape and Free State.

5. Climatic requirements

5.1 Temperature

The plant prefers open light position but not direct sun in summer and requires temperatures between 18 and 26 °C, with average room temperatures ranging from 18 to 24 °C, although the dwarf umbrella plant performs well with temperatures of up to 29 °C. Room temperature where dwarf umbrella tree is placed should not be allowed to drop below 16 °C.

5.2 Water and Humidity

Under natural environment of dwarf umbrella tree are drought-tolerant and prefers moderate humid. They can withstand a little neglect when it comes to watering. Room-temperature water should be used for watering dwarf umbrella tree plant when possible. Medium to high humidity is preferred as with many tropical plants.

6. Soil requirements

Umbrella tree performs best in a well-drained and sandy potting soil. A general purpose potting soil as well, but add perlite or sand to improve drainage. The soil pH level should be acidic to slightly alkaline. An optimal pH range would be 6.0 to 6.5.

6.1 Propagation and planting

It is generally propagated from seed, air layering, pruned cuttings or stem cuttings, but commercially it is propagated by leaf-bud cuttings. Dwarf umbrella tree is an indoor house plant hence; it can be planted at any time during the year. Rooting hormone is crucial for the induction of root formation in the cuttings as they are difficult to root without using a rooting hormone.

7. Uses

Scheffleras are delicate plants, often used to decorate public places, shopping malls and waiting rooms. Smaller Scheffleras are better studied for homes and small offices.

In areas where the plant is winter hardy, it can be used as a:

- Container plant – most found in the garden center.
- Used as a hedge plant
- Single accent or specimen plant in the garden
- Grown and pruned into a small tree with a single trunk or braided

9. References

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Further information can be obtained at:

Directorate Plant Production

Private Bag x250

Pretoria

0001

Tel.: +27 12 319 6072

Fax.: +27 12 319 6353

E-mail: Thabo.Ramashala@daff.gov.za