



# *Schefflera actinophylla* Schefflera<sup>1</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

The large, palmately compound, shiny leaves sit atop the multiple, thin, bare trunks of Schefflera, creating much the impression of an exotic, 25-foot-tall plant-umbrella (Fig. 1). Schefflera lends a tropical effect to any landscape use, from patio containers to interiorscapes to protected outdoor locations. Capable of reaching 40 feet in height, Schefflera will grow rapidly to create a dense windbreak or screen for property lines. When grown in full sun, trees will produce flowers during the summer, an unusual arrangement of small blooms on three-foot-diameter, stiff terminal clusters. These clusters are held above the foliage and are arranged like the ribs of an inverted umbrella, or like the tentacles of an octopus. The red blooms are followed by reddish-purple, half-inch fruits.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Schefflera actinophylla*

**Pronunciation:** shef-LEER-uh ack-tin-oh-FILL-uh

**Common name(s):** Schefflera, Queensland Umbrella-Tree

**Family:** Araliaceae

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10 through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** suitable for growing indoors; not recommended for planting

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

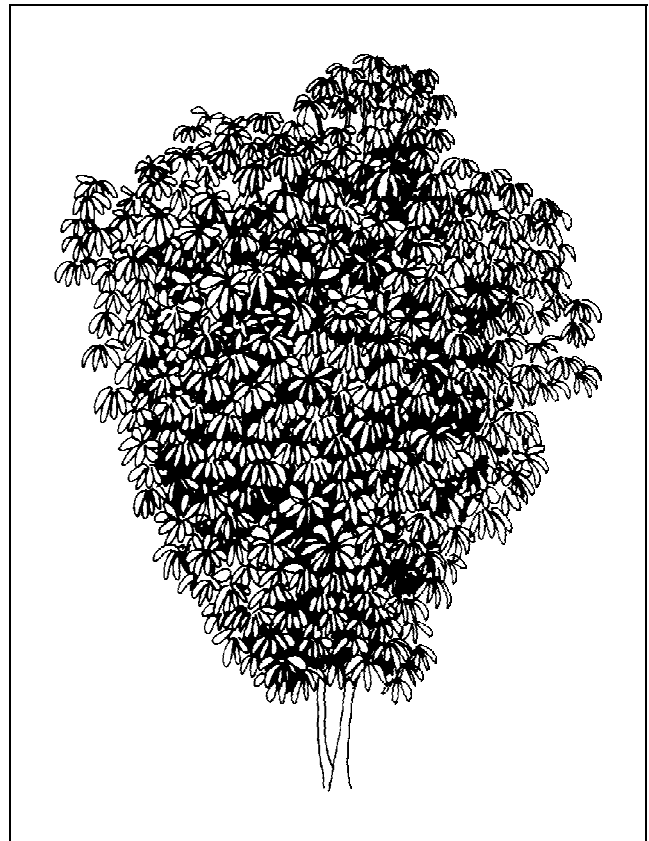


Figure 1. Middle-aged Schefflera.

## DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 30 to 40 feet

**Spread:** 10 to 15 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette

**Crown shape:** upright

**Crown density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** fast

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Texture:** coarse

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** palmately compound

**Leaflet margin:** entire; undulate

**Leaflet shape:** elliptic (oval); oblong

**Leaflet venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** broadleaf evergreen; evergreen

**Leaflet blade length:** 8 to 12 inches; 4 to 8 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** red

**Flower characteristics:** showy; summer flowering

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** < .5 inch

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** purple; red

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree; showy

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; not particularly showy; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** requires pruning to develop strong structure

**Breakage:** susceptible to breakage either at the crotch due to poor collar formation, or the wood itself is weak and tends to break

**Current year twig color:** green

**Current year twig thickness:** stout; thick

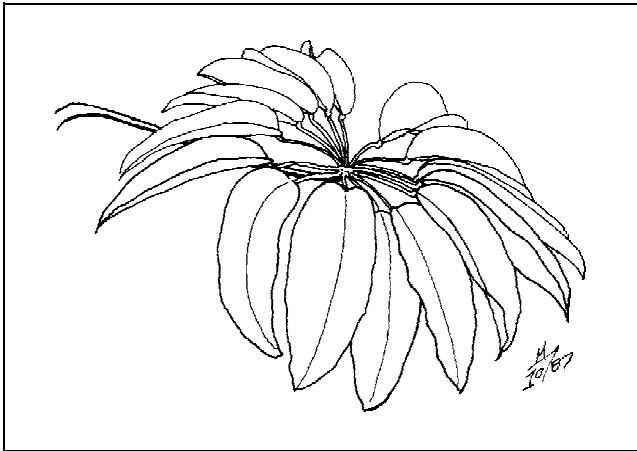


Figure 3. Foliage of Schefflera.

Propagation is by seeds, cuttings, or layers.

### Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases of major concern. Scales and sooty mold are a minor problem. Trees used indoors are susceptible to infestations of spider mites.

### Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun;  
tree grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline;  
acidic; occasionally wet; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** low

**Soil salt tolerance:** poor

### Other

**Roots:** surface roots can lift sidewalks or interfere  
with mowing

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** No entries found.

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not  
affected by pests

## USE AND MANAGEMENT

Schefflera will grow in full sun or partial shade on a wide variety of well-drained soils but require full sun to flower. Trees will display their best growth on rich, moist soil in a full sun location. There is significant leaf drop on this easily-grown tree creating quite a racking job, but plants will require very little pruning if given enough overhead space to develop. Trees may be topped as desired to create multi-level masses of foliage. This may be desirable since the lower portions of the trunks lose all their foliage over time. Sometimes the tree is used as a house plant, but it is too often misused by planting it too close to a building.

It has naturalized in some parts of south Florida and has been placed on a list of exotic pest plants.