Schefflera

Scheffleras are large and graceful tropical plants often used in interior decorating. They are superb long-lived houseplants.

The variegated Dwarf Schefflera (*Schefflera arboricola* ‘Variegata’) has a more compact growth habit.

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**Height/Spread**
Scheffleras are usually 2 to 3 feet tall when sold, and grow to 8 feet or more in height. It is possible to prune them to maintain a lower height.

**Ornamental Features**
Scheffleras are grown for the attractive patterns formed by their leaves, and for their tall and shrubby form. The leaves are composed of oval leaflets arranged in an umbrella spoke pattern. Young plants have small leaves with only three to five leaflets. In older plants the leaves are dramatically larger, eventually developing up to 12 leaflets, each up to 12 inches long.

**Problems**
In the home, plant diseases are very rarely a problem. Too much or too little water plus insects and mites are the main problems. Mealybugs, scale insects and mites are common pests of scheffleras. Root rot usually results from a soil mix that does not drain quickly or overly frequent watering. For more information see, [HGIC 2252 Common Houseplant Insects & Related Pests](http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic).

Dead areas form on leaves several days after exposure to excessive cold. Maintain temperatures above 50 °F. Do not place plants near air conditioning vents. Low light can cause leaf yellowing with spindly, weak stems. Leaf drop can be caused by excessive watering, by low humidity, or by chilling.

**Culture**
Scheffleras prefer medium to bright light.

Water scheffleras thoroughly, then let the soil dry to ½ inch deep before watering again. Never let a plant sit with water in its saucer. For more information see, [HGIC 1459 Indoor Plants: Watering](http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic).

Scheffleras prefer day temperatures between 65 and 75 °F. Nighttime temperatures should remain above 60 °F. Keep plants away from heat vents, radiators, open windows, and air conditioners. Hot or cold drafts will damage plants.

Fertilize scheffleras regularly either with a water-soluble or a time-release houseplant fertilizer. Feed according to label directions. Plants growing in reduced light will need less frequent fertilization than plants growing in bright light.
Repot overcrowded plants at any season, using a general-purpose potting soil. To keep plants small, prune just above a leaf. Propagation is by seed, cuttings and air layering.

**Species & Cultivars**

**Umbrella Tree (S. actinophylla):** This is the most commonly grown species. The umbrella tree grows up to 8 to 10 feet tall indoors. Large leaves of seven or more large leaflets of up to 12 inches long each are arranged in a pinwheel shape. They are leathery and glossy.

- 'Amate' is a selection that has resistance to Alternaria leaf spot and spider mites. Its growth stays compact even in low light.

**Dwarf Schefflera (S. arboricola):** The leaves of this species are divided into seven to 11 short, glossy, green leaflets up to 4 inches long. A few cultivars have golden or variegated foliage. Young plants will have smaller leaves with fewer leaflets. The leaves are thicker than those of *S. actinophylla*.
  - 'Green Gold' has gold splashed leaves.
  - 'Pittmans Pride' is a dwarf, compact form.

Older Dwarf Scheffleras (*Schefflera arboricola*) can be trained into small trees.

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