

Schefflera arboricola - Dwarf Umbrella Tree

The Hawaiian Umbrella Tree, dwarf schefflera arboricola, in nature grows as a small evergreen shrub. As such, it can be easily trained into bonsai form. The roots respond well to pruning and it is not as picky about watering as many other bonsai trees. As it is an evergreen, it has dark green leaves all year round that fan out into an umbrella form which makes it ideal for creating a bonsai style needing a dense canopy. Often times they are used in forest plantings.

The Umbrella Tree can grow well in lower lighting conditions. Most beginners try to keep their trees indoors. This is one of the trees that actually does well in indoor conditions.

Schefflera are not very picky about watering conditions. Incorrect watering is how most beginners end up killing their bonsai trees. These trees are pretty forgiving as long as one does not allow the soil to dry out completely. It is good about letting the owner know if it is being overwatered or underwatered. The Hawaiian Umbrella's leaves will turn black if it is being overwatered or start to curl at the ends if it is being underwatered. It does appreciate high humidity conditions. Indoor conditions tend to be very dry. To increase the humidity around the bonsai it is recommended you place the pot on top of a humidity tray filled with pebbles and water. The evaporating water humidifies the surrounding air. Avoid abnormally dry areas near heaters, furnaces and fireplaces.

Propagation

Potting Mix: Plant Umbrella Tree seeds in a commercial potting mix or make what is known as the peat-lite mix, developed by Cornell University and used by commercial growers for decades. For 2 parts of peat-lite, mix 2 part of No. 2 size vermiculite with 2 parts of peat moss, 1/2 teaspoon of ground limestone and 1/2 teaspoon of 5-10-5 fertiliser.

Soaking the Seeds: Horticulturalists recommend soaking dwarf umbrella tree seeds in hot water for 12 hours before you sow them. Use four times as much water as the volume of seeds. The water should be 60°C. If you soak the seeds in hot water before you plant them they should germinate in about 39 days.

Planting Seeds: Dwarf Umbrella Tree seeds are a medium-sized seed. Sow them twice as deep as their size. After you plant them, water the medium enough to make it moist but not soggy, keep the planting medium between 23 and 29°C and out of direct sunlight.