UF UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA
IFAS Extension

ENH-723

Ravenala madagascariensis: Travelers-Tree[1]

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Introduction

Traveler's-Tree is ideal for creating an exotic, tropical effect with its very large, banana-like leaves, each up to nine feet long and held in fan-shaped formation, and the unusual, small, white flowers which are held erect in canoe-shaped bracts. Leaves are usually seen tattered and torn from exposure to the wind. Traveler's-Tree will reach a height of 30 feet and a spread of 18 feet, growing at a moderate rate. It makes a nice tropical accent in a large landscape, growing too large for most modest-sized yards. The common name is derived from the fact that weary travelers would quench their thirst on the rainwater collected in the enlarged sheaths at the base of the leaves.

General Information

Scientific name: *Ravenala madagascariensis*
Pronunciation: rav-eh-NAY-luh mad-uh-gas-kar-ee-EN-sis
Common name(s): Travelers-Tree
Family: *Strelitziaceae*
USDA hardiness zones: 10A through 11 (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America
Invasive potential: little invasive potential
Uses: deck or patio; specimen; container or planter
Availability: not native to North America

Description

Height: 15 to 25 feet
Spread: 15 to 18 feet
Crown uniformity: irregular

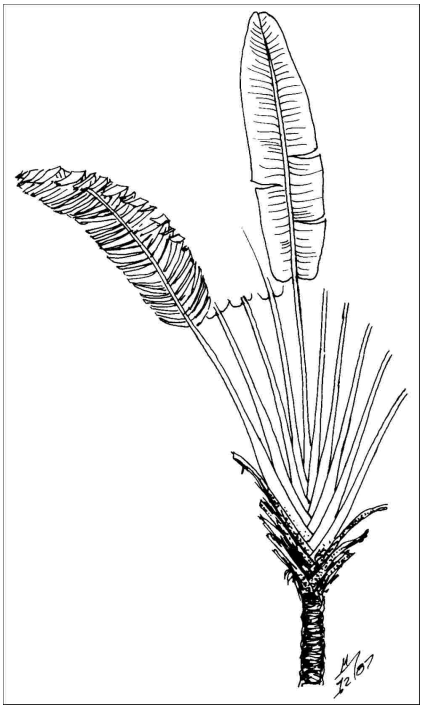

Figure 1. Middle-aged *Ravenala madagascariensis*: Travelers-Tree

Crown shape: palm, upright/erect
Crown density: open
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire

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Figure 2. Range

Leaf shape: oblong
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen, broadleaf evergreen
Leaf blade length: more than 36 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white/cream/gray
Flower characteristics: showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown
Fruit length: less than .5 inch, .5 to 1 inch
Fruit covering: dry or hard
Fruit color: brown
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches don't droop; showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns
Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: not applicable
Current year twig thickness:
Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun, partial sun or partial shade
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; acidic; slightly alkaline; well-drained
Drought tolerance: moderate
Aerosol salt tolerance: none

Other

Roots: not a problem
Winter interest: no
Outstanding tree: no
Ozone sensitivity: unknown
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown

Pest resistance: sensitive to pests/diseases

Use and Management

Traveler's-Tree will produce best growth in full sun, though small potted plants may be grown in shade for a period of time. Plants should be grown on fertile soils, high in organic matter, and routinely cared for. Plants should be grown only in frost-free locations.

Propagation is by division of basal suckers or by seed, which are slow to germinate.

Pests

No pests are of major concern.

Diseases

Cercospora leaf-spot is a very serious disease problem.