**Introduction**

Balfour aralia is usually seen in its variegated form of glossy, light green leaves with irregular milk-white markings at its margins (Fig. 1). The stiffly upright growth habit, comprised of many stems, works well as a hedge or screen, or as a specimen. It grows nicely in a container for patio or terrace. The plant may thin out at the bottom as it grows older. Prune several of the older stems to the ground to encourage thicker foliage near the base.

**General Information**

Scientific name: *Polyscias pinnata*

Pronunciation: poe-LISS-see-us pin-NAY-tuh

Common name(s): balfour aralia

Family: *Araliaceae*

Plant type: shrub

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

**Planting month for zone 10 and 11**: year round

**Origin**: not native to North America

**Uses**: hedge; specimen; foundation; border; accent; cut foliage/twigs; suitable for growing indoors

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

![Shaded area represents potential planting range.](image)

**Description**

- **Height**: 6 to 10 feet
- **Spread**: 2 to 4 feet
- **Plant habit**: round
- **Plant density**: dense
- **Growth rate**: slow
- **Texture**: fine

**Foliage**

- **Leaf arrangement**: alternate

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Polyscias pinnata Balfour Aralia

Leaf type: trifoliate
Leaf margin: dentate
Leaf shape: ovate
Leaf venation: palmate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Other
Roots: usually not a problem
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management
Tolerant of salt spray, full sun, or deep shade, balfour aralia prefers moist, well-drained soil where it can be protected from frost. It grows well as a house plant if not over-watered. Plant on three- to four-foot centers to form a screen or mass planting. The variegated forms look good as a specimen or as an accent growing in a shrub border.

Propagation is by seeds, cuttings, or air layering.

Pests and Diseases
Mites can be a serious foliage problem, and plants also need to be checked for scale.

No diseases are of major concern.

Flower
Flower color: white
Flower characteristic: flowers periodically throughout the year

Trunk and Branches
Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; not particularly showy
Current year stem/twig color: green
Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture
Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun; plant grows in the shade
Soil tolerances: occasionally wet; acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam; clay
Drought tolerance: high
Soil salt tolerances: unknown
Plant spacing: 24 to 36 inches

Figure 3. Foliage of balfour aralia