**Schefflera arboricola**: Dwarf Schefflera

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

---

**Introduction**

This evergreen shrub has attractive dark green, glossy, palmate leaves densely covering flexible, green stems which gently fan out into a rounded crown. Plants are usually seen with multiple stems sprouting from the base. Branching can be encouraged by pinching the stems, which forms a denser shrub. It can be pruned into a small tree over a period of years where it would make an accent or patio tree. The tree remains a green mass, not changing during the year, except when it displays the brilliant orange-yellow fruit in the winter.

**General Information**

**Scientific name:** Schefflera arboricola  
**Pronunciation:** shef-LEER-uh ar-bor-ih-KOLE-uh  
**Common name(s):** Dwarf schefflera

**Family:** Araliaceae  
**USDA hardiness zones:** 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)  
**Origin:** not native to North America  
**Invasive potential:** little invasive potential  
**Uses:** trained as a standard; indoors; deck or patio; container or planter; specimen; hedge; espalier  
**Availability:** not native to North America

---

**Description**

**Height:** 10 to 15 feet  
**Spread:** 6 to 15 feet  
**Crown uniformity:** irregular  
**Crown shape:** round, vase  
**Crown density:** dense  
**Growth rate:** moderate  
**Texture:** medium

---


2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; and Dennis G. Watson, former associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. For more information on obtaining other UF/IFAS Extension publications, contact your county's UF/IFAS Extension office.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, UF/IFAS Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A & M University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Nick T. Place, dean for UF/IFAS Extension.
Foliage
Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: palmately compound
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: elliptic (oval), obovate
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower
Flower color: green
Flower characteristics: not showy

Fruit
Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: less than .5 inch
Fruit covering: fleshy
Fruit color: orange
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches
Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns
Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: green
Current year twig thickness: thick
Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture
Light requirement: partial sun, partial shade, shade tolerant, or full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; acidic; slightly alkaline; well-drained
Drought tolerance: high
Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other
Roots: not a problem
Winter interest: no
Outstanding tree: no
Ozone sensitivity: unknown
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown
Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

Use and Management
A popular house plant, dwarf schefflera performs well in a variety of outdoor settings. It can be used as a hedge, specimen planting, poolside container plant, and even trains well into an espalier on the wall of a building. Aerial roots originate from the lower portions of the trunks and branches, and root into the ground.

Dwarf schefflera is adaptable to sun, part sun or deep shade and does best on light, sandy, well-drained soils. The plant prefers soil which is kept on the dry side. One of the best hedges for shady areas.

There is a cultivar available with variegated foliage.

Propagation is by seed, cuttings, or air-layers.

Pests
Scale and spider mites may be a problem when dwarf schefflera is grown indoors but outdoors pest problems are rare. Occasionally scale may infest this tree.

Diseases
No diseases are of major concern.