

# *Dizygotheca elegantissima* False Aralia<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

The lacy juvenile leaves of false aralia are made up of 7 to 10 slender, jagged leaflets arranged like fingers of a hand (Fig. 1). They are coppery in color when they unfold but then become a very dark grey-green. The mature foliage looks entirely different and is heavier with broader leaflets, giving a coarser silhouette. Both types of leaves can be present on the plant at the same time.



Figure 1. False aralia.

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Dizygotheca elegantissima*

**Pronunciation:** diz-zee-goe-THEEK-uh el-uh-gan-TISS-simuh

**Common name(s):** false aralia

**Family:** *Araliaceae*

**Plant type:** shrub; tree

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

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

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; near a deck or patio; suitable for growing indoors; accent

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



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

## Description

**Height:** 6 to 25 feet

**Spread:** 3 to 15 feet

**Plant habit:** upright

**Plant density:** open

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** fine

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** spiral

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**Leaf type:** palmately compound  
**Leaf margin:** lobed; serrate  
**Leaf shape:** oblong  
**Leaf venation:** none, or difficult to see  
**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen  
**Leaf blade length:** 8 to 12 inches  
**Leaf color:** purple or red  
**Fall color:** no fall color change  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy



Figure 3. Foliage of false aralia.

## Flower

**Flower color:** white  
**Flower characteristic:** summer flowering

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** unknown  
**Fruit length:** less than .5 inch  
**Fruit cover:** fleshy  
**Fruit color:** brown  
**Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems  
**Current year stem/twig color:** green  
**Current year stem/twig thickness:** thick

## Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun; plant grows in the shade  
**Soil tolerances:** slightly alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam  
**Drought tolerance:** high  
**Soil salt tolerances:** poor  
**Plant spacing:** not applicable

## Other

**Roots:** usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest  
**Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding  
**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive  
**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

## Use and Management

False aralia provides a tropical look as a house plant indoors or in outdoor settings, whether in containers or at entranceways where its distinctive foliage casts interesting shadows on background walls. It can be pruned to develop into a small tree. Due to its upright, vertical habit, false aralia is best used as an accent or specimen plant.

This somewhat branched, small evergreen tree will tolerate bright light, performing best in light shade. False aralia needs fertile, well-drained soil and protection from strong winds to develop into a nice specimen.

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

## Pests and Diseases

Nematodes are a problem in the soil, while mites and scale can be serious leaf problems.

No diseases are of major concern.