

Polyscias pinnata Balfour Aralia¹

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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.



Figure 1. Balfour aralia

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



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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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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



Figure 3. Foliage of balfour aralia

Flower

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

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown
Fruit length: unknown
Fruit cover: unknown
Fruit color: unknown
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

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

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.