

# *Ravenala madagascariensis*: Travelers-Tree<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Travelers-tree is ideal for creating an exotic, tropical effect with its very large, banana-like leaves, each up to ten feet long and held in fan-shaped formation, and the unusual, small, creamy white flowers which are held erect in boat-shaped bracts. Leaves are usually seen tattered and torn from exposure to the wind. Travelers-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 (Figure 2)

**Origin:** native to Madagascar

**UF/IFAS Invasive Assessment Status:** not assessed/  
incomplete assessment

**Uses:** deck or patio; specimen; container or planter



Figure 1. Full Form—*Ravenala madagascariensis*: travelers-tree

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Figure 2. Range

## Description

**Height:** 15 to 30 feet

**Spread:** 15 to 18 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular

**Crown shape:** palm, upright/erect

**Crown density:** open

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** coarse

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** oblong

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen, broadleaf evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** 6 to 10 feet

**Leaf color:** medium to dark green

**Fall color:** no color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** creamy white

**Flower characteristics:** showy; emerges in clusters on 1'–2' long stalks constructed of overlapping, boat-shaped, green bracts

**Flowering:** year-round

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** unknown

**Fruit length:** 3 inches

**Fruit covering:** dry or hard; woody capsule

**Fruit color:** brown

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem; seeds are brown and are covered in a bright blue, fiber-like aril

**Fruiting:** year-round



Figure 3. Leaf—*Ravenala madagascariensis*: travelers-tree

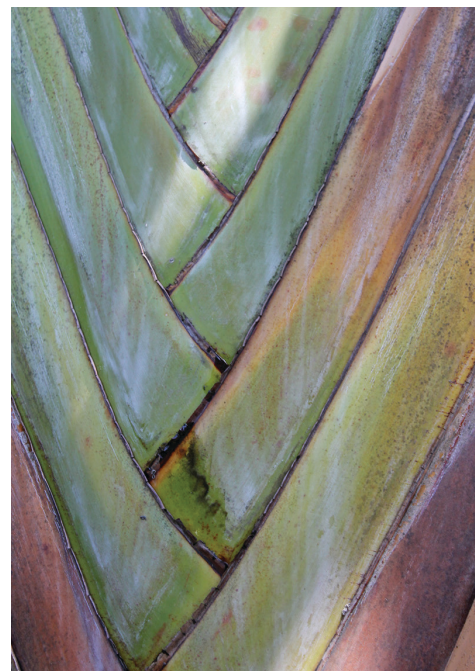


Figure 4. Leaf Base—*Ravenala madagascariensis*: travelers-tree

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/branches:** branches don't droop; showy; typically multi-trunked; no thorns

**Bark:** brown to gray, with remnant leaf bases that wear away to horizontal lines or leaf base scars with age

**Pruning requirement:** needed for strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** not applicable

**Current year twig thickness:**

**Wood specific gravity:** unknown





Figure 5. Flower—*Ravenala madagascariensis*: travelers-tree



Figure 6. Bark—*Ravenala madagascariensis*: travelers-tree  
Credits: Gitta Hasing

## Culture

**Light requirement:** full sun to 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

Travelers-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.

## Reference

Koeser, A.K., Friedman, M.H., Hasing, G., Finley, H., Schelb, J. 2017. Trees: South Florida and the Keys. Gainesville: University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.