

Hawaiian umbrella (Schefflera arboricola)

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The Dwarf Umbrella Tree is a tropical tree with compound leaves which is very suitable for indoor bonsai. It can live with dim light and low humidity, but it must be protected from temperatures below 10° C / 50° F.

The Dwarf Umbrella tree is a tropical tree which is native to Australia, but it is also very common in Southeast Asia. In nature it is an evergreen shrub with thin trunks without much ramification. A characteristic feature is the shape of the compound, radially arranged leaves which sit on long petioles. Scheffleras produce no hard wood and no rough bark. Wiring is not a promising technique for this species, but with constant pruning some taper and ramification can be achieved. Aerial roots can add to the character of the Dwarf Umbrella bonsai tree.

Specific Bonsai care guidelines for the Dwarf Umbrella

Position: The Dwarf Umbrella Tree can be kept inside the house all the year round. Ideal temperatures are 18° C to 22° C / 65° F to 72° F. Scheffleras can tolerate low humidity and dim light but they grow much better and produce smaller leaves if they get much light. The temperature should not fall below 10° C / 50° F. If the windows are opened for ventilation in winter, take care that the Chinese Pepper tree is not exposed to cold draught.

Watering: The Dwarf Umbrella likes a moist soil which must not dry out. In winter it should be watered more cautiously, but if the tree is placed above a heating device, take good care that the rootball does not dry out.

Feeding: Use liquid fertilizer every week from spring to autumn and once a month in winter,

Pruning and wiring: Dwarf Umbrella Bonsai trees can be developed well with thoughtful pruning. A new shoot will point in the same direction like the leaf that is located directly below the cut, growing from its axil. Very healthy trees can be defoliated and at the same time the tips of the twigs should be cut off. This results in lots of new shoots, increasing ramification and smaller leaves. The Dwarf Umbrella Tree produces no hard wood and their trunks and branches are likely to snap when you try to bend them too strongly. Younger shoots are more flexible and can be wired and shaped with less risk of breaking them.

Repotting: Repot every second year in spring. Be careful with the fleshy roots which break easily. Use a standard soil mix.

Propagation: The Dwarf Umbrella Tree can be propagated from seeds and cuttings. Cuttings will root in soil or even in a glass of water.

Pests and diseases: The Dwarf Umbrella Tree is not often attacked by insects. Scale can occasionally occur. In that case use a specific oil-based insecticide.