

***Dizygotheca elegantissima* False Aralia¹**

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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.

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



Figure 1. False Aralia.

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

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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

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

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.

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



Figure 3. Foliage of False Aralia.

Pests and Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.