

***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.

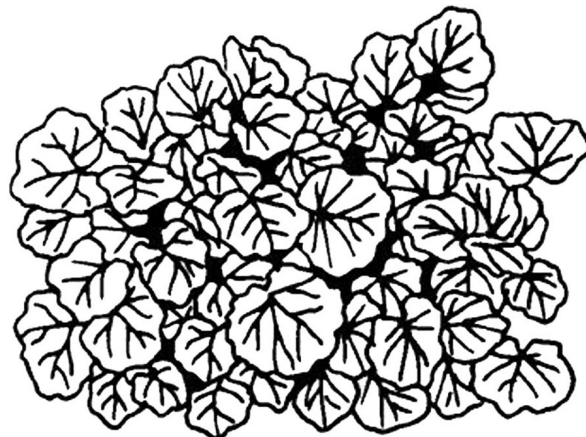


Figure 1. Balfour aralia

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

Description

Height: 6 to 10 feet

Spread: 2 to 4 feet

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Plant habit: round

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: slow

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

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

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.

Mites can be a serious foliage problem and plants also need to be checked for scale.

Pests and Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.



Figure 3. Foliage of balfour aralia