

Heptapleurum arboricola (Syn. *Schefflera arboricola*)

Common name: Dwarf Umbrella Tree

Family: Araliaceae

Habit: Tree

Location: Botanical Garden

Distribution: This species is indigenous to China, but has widely naturalized elsewhere. It is now found in the northern, tropical regions of Australia; in areas of Queensland, it has been noted to significantly compete with native species. It has also been introduced to the Ryukyu Islands, Hawaii, Florida, Bermuda, and Jamaica.

Description:

Dwarf Umbrella Tree is an evergreen shrub growing to 8-9 m tall, free-standing, or clinging to the trunks of other trees. The leaves are palmately compound, with 7-9 leaflets, the leaflets 9-20 cm long and 4-10 cm broad (though often smaller in cultivation). Yellow to greenish flowers are produced in a 20 cm panicle of small umbels, each umbel 7-10 mm diameter with 5-10 flowers. Flowers are not as showy as the fruits. The flowers gradually turn into bright orange berries. These round fruits are flashy to look at, but are not for human consumption.

Uses:

It is commonly grown as a houseplant, popular for its tolerance of neglect and poor growing conditions. It is also grown as a landscape (garden) plant in milder climates where frosts are not severe. Numerous cultivars have been selected for variations in leaf colour and pattern, often variegated with creamy-white to yellow edges or centres, and dwarf forms. Other species are used in the treatment of liver disorders, skin conditions, respiratory infections, cancer, diarrhea, malaria, paralysis, and many other conditions. The main phytochemical constituents identified were triterpenoids and saponins, with sesquiterpenes, phenylpropanoids, and lignans.

