

Ming Aralia Tree *Polyscias fruticosa*



These Asian beauties make excellent house plants, growing as large, or staying as small, as you allow. They take well to pruning and are perfect for bonsai. These are wonderful for growing in your office, as well!

Unlike plants that branch sideways, it grows vertically. It is greatly improved by trimming and training: The tips are trimmed in order to encourage more rapid branching and thicken the trunk. The joints, closely set, then produce a thick growth of branches and a dense covering of leaves. The stems zigzag, forming a complex candelabra. With age, the lower branches die off, leaving a beautiful, ashen tan, corky surface that is gnarled or bumpy where the branches had been. The complex leaves and unusual stems make a Ming Aralia a very oriental-looking plant indeed.

Planting Instructions:

Your plant has been through a hard trip and needs a little TLC to get going again. It is not unusual for some of the leaves to yellow and die from the shipping, but new sprouts will appear soon.

The cultural needs of polyscias are minimal. Use a well draining soil mix; be sure the container you choose has good drainage; you may want to add some rocks or bark in the bottom of the container. Little fertilizer is required; a regular dose of a high-nitrate formula once a month is ample. Roots are fine and do not spread far, so it is not a good idea to over-pot; therefore, I suggest planting your tree in a container that is just 1" – 2" wider and taller than the root ball to start. You can keep the plant small (bonsai) with pruning or allow it to grow large by potting up to the next size pot as the plant grows. Neglect of watering will cause the loss of leaves, but the plants can stand some drought without permanent damage and grow new leaves very quickly. On the other hand, they will not tolerate wet feet for long. Keep your plant in bright shade like near a window as a house or office plant or on a shady lanai.

These are tropical plants, and although they remain unharmed at high temperatures, they do best in an environment with a minimum of 60°F. They will endure cold down to 40°F but for only a very short time – definitely never allow them to freeze.

Propagation is easy and quick. It is preferable to carry out propagation in summer and at temperatures above 72°F. Cuttings are usually derived from normal trimming. Remove leaves from the lowest joints of the cuttings, dip bottom tips in hormone powder, and plant, several to a small pot, in sterile house-plant mix. It is not unusual to find roots in a week. One rarely loses transplants.