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Umbrella Plant Care Guide (Schefflera)



Umbrella Plant (*Schefflera actinophylla*)

Photo Credit: Green Thumb Shots

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Growing, Caring, and Propagating Umbrella Plants Inside

By [Lauren Landers](#)

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Rain or shine, umbrella plants can't help but dazzle with their slender stems and lush green leaves that fan out around the plant's branches like the ribs of an umbrella. If you're looking for an attractive tabletop plant for your office or a bold floor plant for your home, umbrella plants check all the boxes, and this guide will teach you how to grow them!

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These low-maintenance houseplants can *weather* just about anything you throw at them, making them suitable for advanced or beginning growers.

About Schefflera or Umbrella Plants

Umbrella plants, or schefflera, belong to Araliaceae family and are distantly related to plants like ginseng and [English ivy](#). Although there are about 600 species of schefflera native to the tropical rain-

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Pacific Islands, only two species are commonly grown as houseplants.

1. *Schefflera actinophylla*, or the Australian umbrella tree, is a bigger plant that grows up to 15 feet tall indoors.
2. *Schefflera arboricola*, or the dwarf umbrella tree, stays small and usually grows between 2 and 4 feet high.



Schefflera Arboicola or Umbrella Tree has exotic yellow green leaves.
Credit: nnattalli

In zones 10 and up, umbrella plants can be grown in the garden, and outdoor plants may produce clusters of red, white, or pink flowers in summer. However, these plants can be invasive in warm areas, and they aren't frost tolerant, so it's usually best to keep them inside. Unfortunately,

umbrella plants rarely bloom indoors, but

monly sport creamy white leaf variegation, too!

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Aside from their stunning good looks, umbrella plants are also impressively low maintenance, and they don't need as much water, humidity, or light as many tropical houseplants. As long as these plants receive bright, indirect sun and regular water, they're relatively low fuss and can live 25 years or more with proper care!

Just keep in mind that umbrella plants are toxic to pets, and they should be kept out

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PLANTING



Schefflera plant is the perfect table top plant. Credit: Jana Milin

As with most houseplants, umbrella plants should be repotted as soon as you bring them home and repotted every 1 to 2 years after that to accommodate their growing roots. If you want your umbrella plant to stay small, let your plant become a little root-bound and only repot it every 2 to 3 years. When repotting, look for sturdy and well-draining terracotta, ceramic, or plastic containers, and make ~~sure the containers have drainage holes~~

- While schefflera can be repotted in any season, spring is the best time for repotting.
- Before repotting, give your plant a deep drink of water to make the old pot easier to remove. It's also a good idea to don gardening gloves.
Schefflera sap can be a skin irritant!
- To remove the old pot, hold your umbrella plant's stems in one hand and wiggle the pot free with your other hand. If the pot isn't budging, run a butter knife around the pot's rim to loosen the soil.
- Choose a new growing container just one or two sizes bigger than your plant's existing pot and sprinkle several inches of a rich, well-draining potting mix inside.
- Gently loosen any encircling roots and then position your umbrella pot in its new pot so that the plant is at the same depth that it was growing in its old container.
- Fill in the space around your plant with more potting mix, firm the soil around your plant's stems, water well, and re-

GROWING

Well-maintained umbrella plants grow quickly and they don't need a lot of attention. To keep your umbrella plant looking its best, simply dust off its leaves from time to time with a damp cloth and use the following tips to provide your plant with the care it craves!

Light

Umbrella plants grow best in bright, indirect light, while full sun can scorch their leaves. For best results, grow these plants in south- or west-facing windows and consider installing sheer curtains if your windows receive too much direct sun. In low light, umbrella plants can be leggy, floppy, or drop their leaves, but these issues can be fixed by moving your plant into brighter light!

Water

Like most tropical houseplants, umbrella

avoid these issues, water umbrella plants only when the top 1 to 2 inches of soil feels dry, and empty excess water out of your plant's saucer after watering.

Fertilizer

To fuel their vigorous growth, provide umbrella plants with an organic, liquid fertilizer every 4 to 6 weeks in spring and summer, but withhold all fertilizer in fall and winter. If desired, these plants can also be fed with fertilizer stakes or a slow-release, granular fertilizer. Just follow the application instructions on your fertilizer packaging!

Humidity

Umbrella plants grow best when humidity levels are between 40 and 60% and they should be kept away from drafts and vents. That said, umbrella plants aren't as picky about humidity as some other houseplants and they usually do just fine at standard indoor humidity levels. If your plant looks dry or develops brown edges

Seasonal Care

Umbrella plant care doesn't change much throughout the year, although these plants don't need as much water in fall or winter and they should only be fertilized during spring and summer. If you move your umbrella plant outside in summer, be sure to bring it back indoors before temperatures dip below 60°F, and thoroughly check your plant for pests too.

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Throughout the year, prune away dead or damaged leaves as needed. If your plant is outgrowing your space or you want your

encourage new growth. Remember to use sterilized pruners and save your stem trimmings for propagation!



Cutting of *Schefflera arboricola* for rooting. Credit: Tatiana Foxy.

Propagation

Although umbrella plants can be propagated from seeds, the easiest and fastest way to propagate these plants is from stem cuttings or prunings!

- To start, take 4 to 6 inch long stem cuttings from healthy umbrella plant branches, and make your pruning cuts at a 45 degree angle near a leaf node.
- Remove the lower leaves on the cuttings, dip the cut stem ends in water and rooting hormone, and then plant the cuttings in pots filled with a well-draining potting mix.
- Cover the cuttings with clear plastic to trap humidity, move the cuttings into bright, indirect light, and water enough to keep the soil evenly moist.
- You'll know your cuttings have rooted when you can't easily lift the stems from the soil with your fingers!

Types

Schefflera actinophylla and *Schefflera arboricola* are the most common umbrella plants sold to home growers. However, these plants come in different varieties, and there are a few look-a-like plants you may also enjoy if you love the look of Schefflera!

- **'Gold Capella'**: This variegated dwarf

and boasts creamy white and deep green leaves.

- ‘**Janine**’: Another variegated option, this dwarf umbrella plant grows up to 2 feet tall and is commonly used in bonsai.
- ‘**Money Tree**’: While money trees (*Pachira aquatica*) are not closely related to umbrella plants, they have a similar look to Schefflera. However, they’re non-toxic to pets!



Commonly known as “Money Tree,” *Pachira aquatica* has a similar look to Umbrella Plants. Credit: MidPhotographer

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PESTS/DISEASES

While umbrella plants are generally pest- and disease-free, they can be affected by overwatering, temperature stress, and other issues. Taking action at the first signs of trouble is the best way to ensure your umbrella plants recover!

- **Pests**, like aphids, spider mites, scale, and mealybugs, can sometimes infest umbrella plants and cause leaf stippling, sticky plant leaves, and issues like sooty mold. To reduce pest problems, check your plants over carefully if you placed them outdoors during summer, and use an organic insecticidal soap or neem oil spray to treat infestations.
- **Yellow or brown leaves** are usually caused by over- or underwatering. Keeping your plant's leaves dry and

to the touch can prevent

these problems.

- **Leaf drop** commonly results from temperature or watering stress. If your umbrella plants look sparse, trim bald stems back and put your plants outside in a sheltered spot in summer to encourage new leafy growth!

WIT AND WISDOM

- Schefflera was named after Johann Peter Ernst von Scheffler, an 18th-century German botanist, and physician.
- Umbrella plants have many other creative nicknames, like parasol plants and octopus trees!
- These plants are commonly used in feng shui and are usually positioned in the southeast corner of homes to increase chi and attract prosperity and wealth.

HOUSEPLANTS

Lauren Landers



Lauren is a gardener, writer, and public speaker with over a decade of experience helping others learn about gardening, homesteading, and sustainable living. [Read More from Lauren Landers](#)

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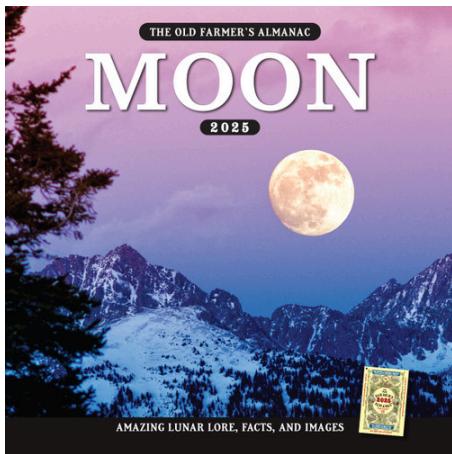
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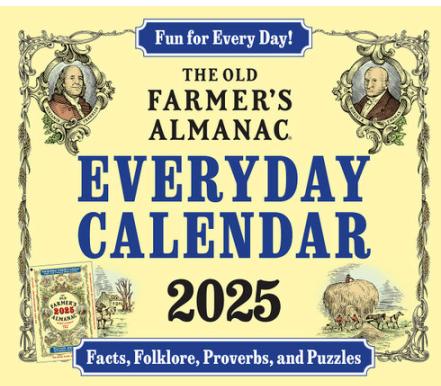
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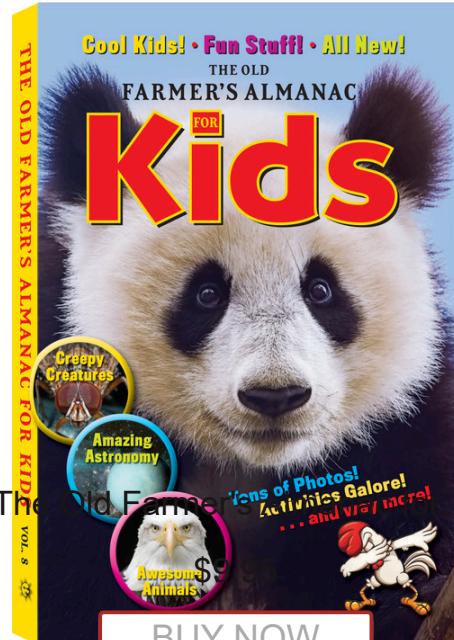
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