

Schefflera actinophylla (Endl.) Harms

Family:

Araliaceae

Harms, H.A.T. in Engler, H.G.A. & Prantl, K.A.E. (1894) *Die Natürlichen Pflanzenfamilien* 3(8): 36.

Common name:

Umbrella Tree; Octopus Tree

Stem

Usually grows into a tree seldom exceeding 30 cm dbh but also flowers and fruits as a shrub.

Leaves

Stipules attached to the base of the compound leaf petiole and closely appressed to the twigs. One stipule per leaf. Leaf bearing twigs very stout, usually more than 2 cm diameter. Leaflet blades about 15-30 x 7.5-11 cm.

Flowers

Inflorescence large, individual branches 50 cm long or longer. Flowers sessile in heads. Perianth tube about 5 mm diameter at the apex. Stamens ten, filaments about 2.5 mm long. Ovary rounded, hemispherical at the apex, stigma sessile.

Fruit

Fruits aggregated in heads, about 20-25 mm diam. Individual fruits +/- globose, about 6-8 mm diam. Seed +/- reniform to slightly lunate, about 5-6 x 3 mm, about 10-12 per fruit. Cotyledons about as wide as the radicle.

Seedlings

Cotyledons ovate or elliptic, about 10-12 mm long. At the tenth leaf stage: leaves with 3-6 leaflets, leaflets ovate to elliptic, glabrous, apex acuminate, mucronate, with 2-5 fine pointed teeth on each side; petiole of compound leaf about 10-15 cm long; stipules large, axillary, attached to the base of the petiole. Seed germination time 17 days.

Distribution and Ecology

Widespread in NT, CYP, NEQ, CEQ and south to south-eastern Queensland. Altitudinal range from near sea level to 1000 m. This species can grow as a normal tree but frequently grows as an epiphyte or lithophyte usually in rain forest but also in wet sclerophyll and open forest. Also occurs naturally in the Aru Islands and New Guinea. Now widely cultivated throughout the world and becoming naturalised in various places.

Natural History & Notes

Usually grows as an epiphyte in the crowns of trees but will grow quite happily in the garden. This species produces large inflorescences and infructescences. The flowers are very popular with insects including the introduced honey bee nectar or pollen feeding birds which visit in large noisy flocks. The fruits are very popular with birds particularly the Brown Pigeon or Brown Cuckoo Dove (*Macropygia amboinensis*).

Fruit eaten by several species of birds. Cooper & Cooper (1994).

Synonyms

***Brassaia actinophora* Endl.**, *Novarum Stirpium Decades* 1: table(1839). ***Brassaia actinophylla* Endl.**, *Novarum Stirpium Decades* 10: 89(1839), Type: Crescit in Nova-Hollandia tropica. (Ferd. Bauer Illustr. t. 334 - 336).

RFK Code

273



Flowers. © CSIRO



Habit, leaves and flowers. © CSIRO



Fruit. © W. T. Cooper



Scale bar 10mm. © CSIRO



10th leaf stage. © CSIRO



Cotyledon stage, epigeal germination. © CSIRO



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