Lady Palm

*Rhapis excelsa*

**Introduction**

The delicate Lady Palm forms dense clumps of bamboo-like stalks topped with very dark green, broad, fan-shaped leaves. Performing well in north side foundation plantings or other shady locations, slow-growing Lady Palm is also ideal for containers. They lend a rich tropical look to the landscape. Lady Palms can be effective accents in a shrub border or near an entryway. Plant on three to four foot centers to create a mass effect. Locate them in a low-growing ground cover such as Mondo Grass or Lily-Turf for a dramatic effect. This palm looks wonderful when it is lighted from below, or silhouetted at night.

**General Information**

- **Scientific name:** *Rhapis excelsa*
- **Pronunciation:** RAY-piss eck-SELL-suh
- **Common name(s):** Lady Palm
- **Family:** Palmae
- **Plant type:** palm
- **USDA hardiness zones:** 8B through 11
  - Planting month for zone 8: year round
  - Planting month for zone 9: year round
  - Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round
- **Origin:** not native to North America
- **Uses:** screen; border; mass planting; specimen; container or above-ground planter; naturalizing; accent; suitable for growing indoors
- **Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range
- **Growth rate:** slow

**Description**

- **Height:** 6 to 12 feet
- **Spread:** 3 to 12 feet
- **Plant habit:** palm
- **Plant density:** moderate
- **Texture:** medium

**Foliage**

- **Leaf arrangement:** alternate
- **Leaf type:** simple
- **Leaf margin:** lobed
- **Leaf shape:** fan-shaped
- **Leaf venation:** palmate
- **Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen
Leaf blade length: 8 to 12 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower
Flower color: yellow
Flower characteristic: pleasant fragrance; spring flowering

Fruit
Fruit shape: oval
Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches
Fruit cover: fleshy
Fruit color: white
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches
Trunk/bark/branches: showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems
Current year stem/twig color: not applicable
Current year stem/twig thickness: not applicable

Culture
Light requirement: plant grows in the shade
Soil tolerances: alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam
Drought tolerance: moderate
Soil salt tolerances: poor
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other
Roots: sprouts from roots or lower trunk
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
Lady Palm needs partial to deep shade and fertile organic soil to look its best but will tolerate the poor light, dust, and drought usual of indoor container culture. Be sure that drainage is adequate for indoor use.

Spreading slowly by underground stems, Lady Palm is usually propagated by division. Make more divisions than you need since many canes may not transplant successfully. There are several other species of Rhapis for different leaf sizes and shapes. Pest problems include scale, palm aphids, sooty mold, and caterpillars, although none are usually serious.

Pests and Diseases
No diseases are of major concern.