Farm Life Aralias

Varieties

Farm Life grows four varieties of Aralias: Ming, Variegated Balfouriana, 'Lemon Lime' Balfouriana and Fabian. All four are created by planting multiple canes in a 14" pot. The pot finishes at a height of 6 to 6.5 feet after about 8 months. Fabian Aralia have large round purple colored leaves and maintain a columnar growth pattern. The Balfourianas have large round leaves also, but the 'Lemon Lime' has a green and greenish yellow coloring while the variegated variety alternates green and white. The Balfourianas grow tall but will also bush out much more than the Fabian. The Ming Aralia has a completely different leaf. Ming Aralias have multiple smaller serrated-edge leaves creating a full, feathery, drooping look.

Light

Aralias do not need a high light environment. Tropical Foliage Plants by Lynn Griffith lists the lower threshold at 75 foot-candles which is in the same range as Janet Craig, Kentia, Mass Cane and less than required for Aglaonema and Marginata. At Farm Life these plants are grown in a 75% shade environment and become very full. An environment that is "too dark", for an Aralia, means that the amount of leaves the plant can maintain, at that light level, is below the aesthetic thresh-hold for the job. These plants will maintain as many leaves as they can at a given light level.

Water

Of the four varieties that we grow at Farm Life, the Fabian requires the least amount of water and the Ming requires the most. This is probably due to the total leaf surface area of the Ming being much greater than the Fabian. The Balfourianas fall in the middle. Compared to other plants the Aralias are not exceptional in their water needs. Farm Life has had great success extending the watering frequency of interior Ming Aralias to two weeks with a sub-irrigating container.

Fertilizer

A water soluble general purpose foliage plant fertilizer will work well on Aralias. These fertilizers will have an NPK ratio of 3:1:2 or 2:1:2 with minor nutrients included. A proper fertilizer schedule and dose must be determined for each location. Aralias are not heavy feeders, so start low and increase if necessary. The results of fertilizer trials may take months to notice, so don't rush a judgment. A good nutrient maintenance program would include adding 2-3 tablespoons of dolomite to the top of the soil annually and a minor nutrient drench twice per year. Farm Life Aralias are grown on a drip fertigation system which allows them to transition to a new fertilizer program immediately upon installation.

Insects and Mites

Aralias can have problems with mites, mealybugs, aphids and probably scale and thrips. At Farm Life only the first three have been observed on Aralias, but there is no reason why scale and thrips could not become a problem tomorrow. Mealybugs, scale and aphids can be controlled with a systemic insecticide like Safari or Merit used as either a spray or drench. Mites need to be controlled with predator mites. Both popular species, Neoseiulus californicus and Phytoseiulus persimilis, will work well. One advantage of predator mites is the reduction in pesticide use, but more importantly predators can be more effective than miticides. Miticides are not systemic and therefore must contact each mite to kill it. Multiple well timed applications are required to clean up any newly hatched mites that were not killed the first time. This is not only difficult in an interior-scape, but also in a nursery. If this is not done to perfection, the remaining spider mites will quickly repopulate the plant and continue their attack. Predators will completely remove all mites from a plant and eat all the eggs, then continue searching for other areas with spider mites. If plants are scouted each time they are watered then a spider mite population can be discovered early enough to apply predators. Farm Life has reduced miticide use to nearly zero due to a dedicated predator mite program. At Farm Life predator mites are released somewhere in the nursery every week of the year with results far superior to spraying miticides.

Aralia Maintenance Flowchart

Light levels are assumed to be adequate to support the plant. Unexplained leaf drop might mean light levels are too low. Some leaf drop is expected while plant acclimates to new area.