

Tetrapanax - Growing Guide

Growing Tetrapanax Papyrifera

Commonly known as 'Rice Paper Tree'

This plant has behaved entirely in character with us at Caerhays but we had little idea what to expect and were a bit surprised at how it has or has not grown and developed.

We expected an evergreen shrub or small tree with huge leaves. We therefore hid it away in a woodland glade near a new planting of various schefflera species which also came from Taiwan. While the schefflera kept their leaves through the gales the tetrapanax did not most winters and they were simply snapped off. For a few years the plant did not seem to mind and regrew equally enormous leaves each spring and summer creating a small tree with a 6ft trunk and papery striped light brown bark.



A. donax var. *versicolor* &
Tetrapanax papyrifera
'Rex'



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Tetrapanax papyrifera
'Rex'

At Ventnor Botanic Gardens there was a clump of trunks growing up to 15ft in a fairly shady corner in front of a high wall. Bananas grew (and still grow well) beside it. However, in the last five years, the clump has taken a severe knock and the woody stems have died to reveal a sea of suckers.

This is a plant well worth growing for its five to eleven lobed leaves which can be 20in across. The effect is stunning to the uninitiated.

We have yet to see any of its flower panicles or inflorescences but, in the absence of seeds, we have plenty of suckers to lift whenever we like.



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