

# Elephant Tree (*Operculicarya decaryi*) – Care Card

## Quick Facts

Origin	Southwestern Madagascar
Family	Anacardiaceae
USDA Zones	9b–11
Bloom	Late winter–early spring (red flowers)
Mature Size	Up to 30 ft in habitat
Growth Rate	Slow
Special Note	Dioecious – male & female flowers on separate plants

## Care Instructions

Aspect	Details
Light	Full sun to partial shade; best leaf color in bright sun.
Temperature	Ideal: 60–80°F (15–27°C); protect from frost; minimum 40°F (4°C).
Watering	Spring–Fall: Water deeply when soil dries. Winter: Keep almost dry if dormant.
Soil	Fast-draining mix: 60–80% mineral (pumice, perlite, shale), 20–40% coarse organics; pH 5.5–7.5.
Fertilizer	Low-strength balanced feed (≤15-15-15) monthly during active growth above 60°F.
Pruning	Prune any time; shape after trunk reaches desired height; encourage branching.
Propagation	Seeds (need male & female plants) or tuberous root cuttings in spring/early summer.
Pests/Disease	Generally pest-free; avoid overwatering to prevent root rot.

## References

1. University of Arizona – Campus Arboretum. \**Operculicarya decaryi*\* profile. 2. von Teichman, I., & Hardy, D.S. (1992). Flower and fruit structure in *Operculicarya decaryi*. Botanical Bulletin of Academia Sinica, 33, 225–232. 3. Randrianasolo, A., & Lowry II, P.P. (2006). *Operculicarya* (Anacardiaceae) revisited. Adansonia, 28(2), 359–371. 4. Egli, U. (Ed.). (2002). Illustrated Handbook of Succulent Plants: Dicotyledons. Springer. 5. Cultural Information – \**Operculicarya decaryi*\* fact sheet.