



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Ficus pumila*¹

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Introduction

The dense, rapid growth of small, dark green, overlapping leaves on slender stems makes Creeping Fig a favorite vine to grow on walls where it lends a lacy pattern in its early stages of growth (Fig. 1). It needs no support to adhere to a wall. As twigs reach about 2-years-old, larger mature leaves develop on moderately thick, hairy stems. These grow out from the wall several feet forming dense growth. It also makes a low, dense ground cover only one or two inches high. Later developing larger leaves and woody growth, Creeping Fig grown as a ground cover needs regular pruning along the edges to keep it neat and within bounds. It is also well-suited for use in topiaries or hanging baskets.

General Information

Scientific name: *Ficus pumila*

Pronunciation: FYE-kus PEW-mil-luh

Common name(s): Creeping Fig

Family: *Moraceae*

Plant type: ground cover

USDA hardiness zones: 8B through 11 (Fig. 2)

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: espalier; container or above-ground planter; hanging basket; cascading down a wall

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

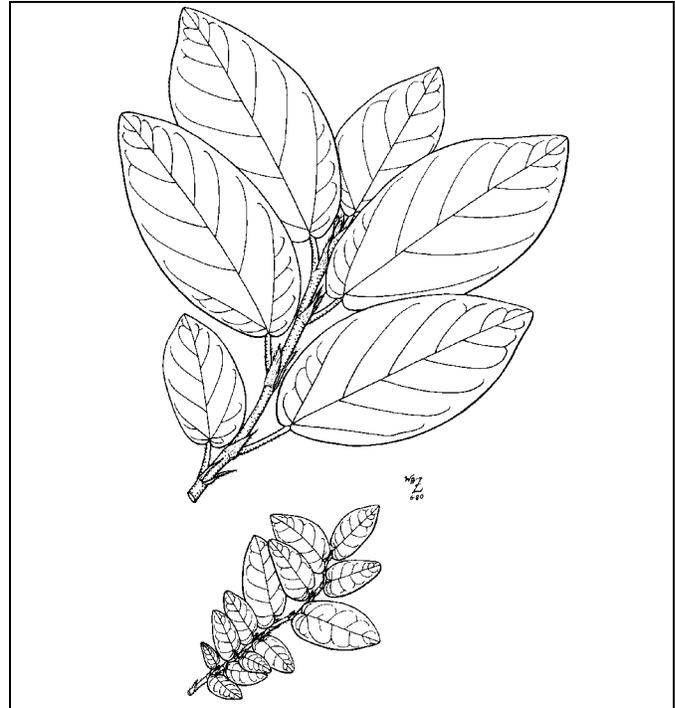


Figure 1. Creeping Fig.

Description

Height: depends upon supporting structure

Spread: depends upon supporting structure

Plant habit: prostrate (flat); spreading

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-212, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October, 1999 Please visit the EDIS Web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

- Leaf arrangement:** alternate
- Leaf type:** simple
- Leaf margin:** entire
- Leaf shape:** ovate
- Leaf venation:** reticulate; pinnate
- Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen
- Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches
- Leaf color:** variegated
- Fall color:** no fall color change
- Fall characteristic:** not showy

Flower

- Flower color:** green
- Flower characteristic:** spring flowering

Fruit

- Fruit shape:** oval
- Fruit length:** unknown
- Fruit cover:** fleshy
- Fruit color:** green

Fruit characteristic: persists on the plant

Trunk and Branches

- Trunk/bark/branches:** typically multi-trunked or clumping stems
- Current year stem/twig color:** green
- Current year stem/twig thickness:** medium

Culture

- Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun; plant grows in the shade
- Soil tolerances:** occasionally wet; slightly alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam
- Drought tolerance:** high
- Soil salt tolerances:** poor
- Plant spacing:** 18 to 24 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: aggressive, spreading plant

Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Growing in almost any light conditions, except all-day sun, Creeping Fig needs well-drained soil and moderate moisture until it becomes well established. When grown in the high heat conditions of full sun, leaves often take on a yellowish cast. Plant on 12 to 18-inch centers for quick establishment as a ground cover.

If you use this plant as a ground cover near a wall or building, it will grow onto the wall very quickly. To prevent this, clip the edge of the ground cover regularly. As the vine grows onto the wall, tendrils attach themselves and are very difficult to remove. The wall often needs to be repainted to cover up the tendrils that adhere to the wall.

Cultivars include: 'Minima', slender, small leaves; 'Quercifolia', tiny lobed leaves, somewhat like miniature oak leaves; and 'Variegata', leaves have creamy white markings.

Propagation is by cuttings which root easily.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.