INTRODUCTION

This rapidly-growing, rounded, broad-headed, evergreen tree can reach 50 feet or more in height with an equal spread (Fig. 1). The glossy, dark green, leathery leaves are densely clothed on large, somewhat weeping branches and unlike the species, are not usually infested with thrips. New growth, produced all year long, is a light rose to chartreuse color, giving the tree a lovely two-toned effect. The smooth, light grey trunk is quite striking, can grow to three or four feet in diameter, and it firmly supports the massively spreading canopy. Branches trained to remain less than half the diameter of the trunk are well-secured to the trunk.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Ficus retusa* ‘Green Gem’
Pronunciation: FYE-kuss  ree-TOO-suh
Common name(s): ‘Green Gem’ Cuban-Laurel
Family: Moraceae
USDA hardness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: suitable for growing indoors; not recommended for planting
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardness range

DESCRIPTION

Height: 45 to 55 feet
Spread: 40 to 55 feet
Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms
Crown shape: round; spreading; vase shape
Crown density: dense
Growth rate: fast
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: elliptic (oval)
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

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1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-256, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.
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**Flower**

*Flower characteristics:* inconspicuous and not showy

**Fruit**

*Fruit shape:* round  
*Fruit length:* < .5 inch  
*Fruit covering:* fleshy  
*Fruit color:* red  
*Fruit characteristics:* does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter

**Trunk and Branches**

*Trunk/bark/branches:* grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns  
*Pruning requirement:* requires pruning to develop strong structure  
*Breakage:* resistant  
*Current year twig color:* gray  
*Current year twig thickness:* thin

**Culture**

*Light requirement:* tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun  
*Soil tolerances:* clay; loam; sand; acidic; occasionally wet; alkaline; well-drained  
*Drought tolerance:* high  
*Aerosol salt tolerance:* moderate

**Other**

*Roots:* surface roots can lift sidewalks or interfere with mowing  
*Winter interest:* no special winter interest  
*Outstanding tree:* not particularly outstanding  
*Invasive potential:* No entries found.  
*Verticillium wilt susceptibility:* susceptible  
*Pest resistance:* no pests are normally seen on the tree

**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

Few aerial roots are produced making this a suitable street tree. Also used as a park tree, Cuban-Laurel tolerates trimming well and can be shaped and sheared into a hedge, screen or barrier. It also makes
a wonderful shade tree on large properties. Plant at least 10 feet from the curb or sidewalk so surface roots won’t cause damage. The fruit stains cars and sidewalks and can be generally messy on paved and other hard surfaces. Importation of the wasp which pollinates the flowers may stimulate production of fertile fruit and this could allow the tree to become a pesty weed.

Growing easily in full sun or partial shade, Cuban-Laurel thrives on various well-drained soils and is moderately salt-tolerant.

Propagation is by cuttings or air layering.

Pests

Scales are a problem, but it is resistant to thrips.

Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.