



Ficus benjamina Weeping Fig¹

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INTRODUCTION

This is a huge tree growing to 60 feet tall and 60 to 70 feet wide (Fig. 1). The dense, rounded canopy and gracefully drooping branches of Weeping Fig made it quite popular as a landscape tree until recently. The thick, shiny, two to five-inch-long, evergreen leaves generously clothe the long branches, and the tiny figs eventually turn a deep red. Branches will weep toward the ground forming a canopy so dense that nothing grows beneath it.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Ficus benjamina*

Pronunciation: FYE-kuss ben-juh-MYE-nuh

Common name(s): Weeping Fig

Family: *Moraceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: Bonsai; container or above-ground planter; hedge; suitable for growing indoors; trainable as a standard; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

DESCRIPTION

Height: 45 to 60 feet

Spread: 60 to 100 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

Crown shape: round; spreading; weeping

Crown density: dense

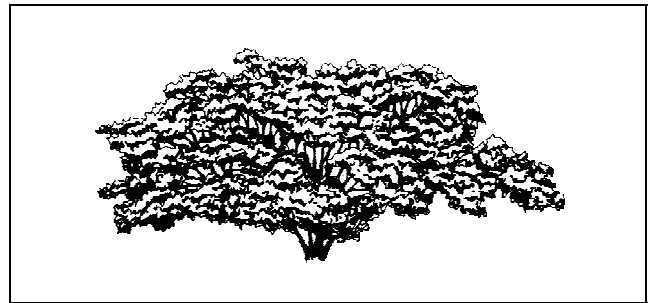


Figure 1. Middle-aged Weeping Fig.

Growth rate: fast

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire; undulate

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval); ovate

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

Flower

Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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: bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; 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 the shade; 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: long-term health usually not affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Fruit can stain cars and sidewalks so the tree should not be planted close to streets, walks or parking lots. It also makes quite a mess around the tree as the fruit fall to the ground. The tree is much too large for

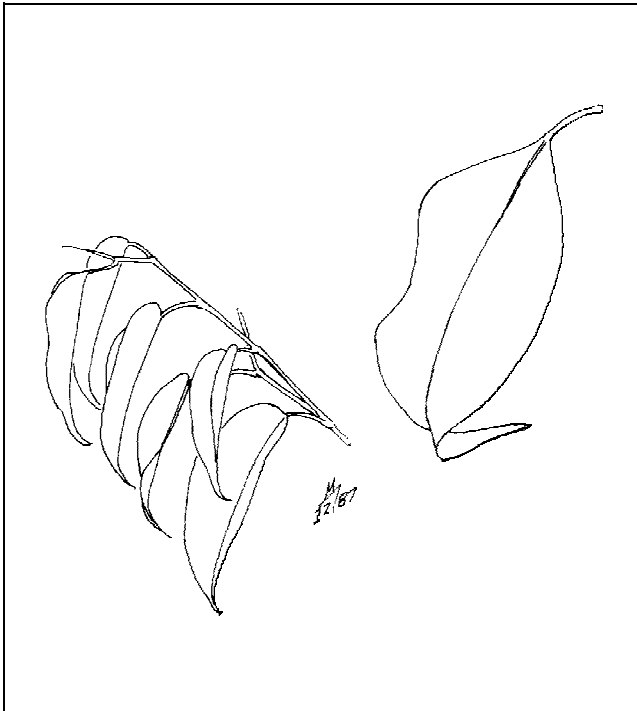


Figure 3. Foliage of Weeping Fig.

residential planting unless it is used as a hedge or clipped screen, but can be seen growing into massive trees in parks and other large-scale areas. Aerial roots descend from the branches, touch the ground and take root, eventually forming numerous sturdy trunks which can clog a landscape. Trees can grow to be quite large and spreading in this fashion. Roots grow rapidly invading gardens, growing under and lifting sidewalks, patios, and driveways.

There have been recent reports of fertile fruit germinating in some landscapes in south Florida. This is of concern since this could give the tree the potential of spreading and perhaps becoming a pesty weed, something which is definitely not needed in south Florida.

Able to tolerate severe pruning, Weeping Fig can also be successfully used as a clipped hedge or screen and is probably best used in this fashion, or can be trained into an espalier or topiary. Young trees are often grown in containers, appearing on patios, at entranceways, or indoors.

Weeping Fig will grow in full sun or partial shade on any well-drained soil. Plants should be carefully watered when young and later during droughts. Plants are very frost-sensitive.

The cultivar 'Exotica' has wavy-edged leaves with long, twisted tips. There are other *Ficus* such as *Ficus rubiginosa* which do not produce aerial roots and are much better suited as landscape trees for shade because they will not take over the landscape as will Weeping Fig.

Propagation is by cuttings or layering.

Pests

Weeping Fig may be infected by scales, but is resistant to leaf thrips which will distort new leaves on some other figs.

Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.