



Ficus retusa Cuban-Laurel¹

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INTRODUCTION

This rapidly-growing, rounded, broad-headed, evergreen tree (also known as *Ficus microcarpa*) 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 are 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*

Pronunciation: FYE-kuss ree-TOO-suh

Common name(s): Cuban-Laurel

Family: *Moraceae*

USDA hardiness 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 hardiness range

DESCRIPTION

Height: 50 to 60 feet

Spread: 40 to 60 feet

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

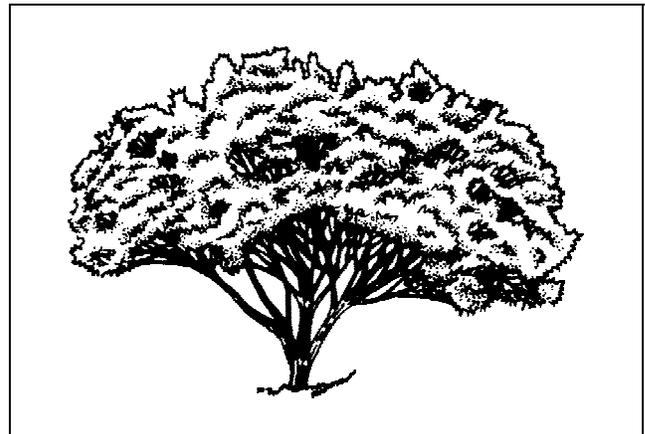


Figure 1. Mature Cuban-Laurel.

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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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Flower

Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch; < .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; 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: long-term health usually not affected by pests

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

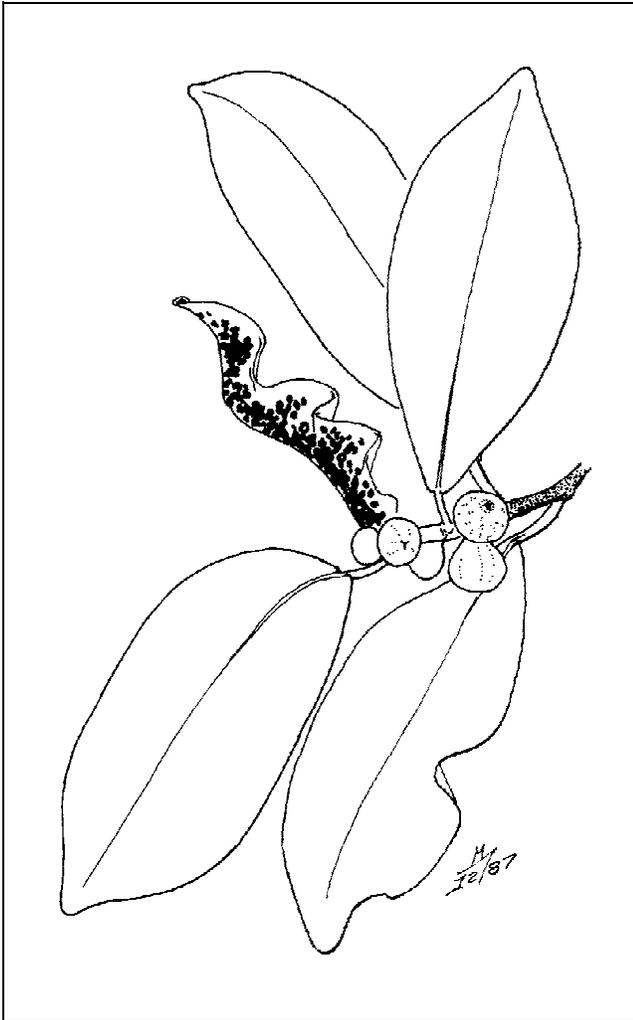


Figure 3. Foliage of Cuban-Laurel.

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.

The cultivar 'Green Gem' is resistant to thrips and is commonly available.

Propagation is by cuttings or air layerings.

Pests

Scales and thrips are problems. Thrips often infest the foliage but will not kill the plant.

Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.