

# *Ficus benjamina*: Weeping Fig<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

This is a huge tree growing to 60 feet tall and 60 to 70 feet wide. 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.

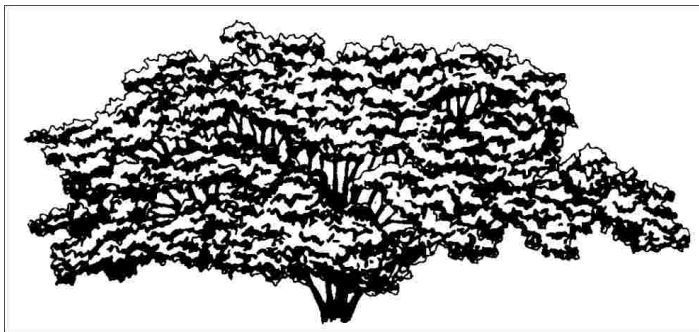


Figure 1. Middle-aged *Ficus benjamina*: Weeping Fig

## 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

**Invasive potential:** has been evaluated using the IFAS Assessment of the Status of Non-Native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas (Fox et al. 2005). This species is not documented in any undisturbed natural areas in Florida. Thus, it is not considered a problem species and may be used in Florida.

**Uses:** trained as a standard; indoors; container or planter; hedge; Bonsai

**Availability:** not native to North America



Figure 2. Range

## Description

**Height:** 45 to 60 feet

**Spread:** 60 to 100 feet

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical

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**Crown shape:** weeping, round, spreading

**Crown density:** dense

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** fine

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** undulate, entire

**Leaf shape:** ovate, elliptic (oval)

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** unknown

**Flower characteristics:** not showy

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** less than .5 inch

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** red

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves a litter problem

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** branches droop; showy; typically one trunk; thorns

**Pruning requirement:** needed for strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** gray

**Current year twig thickness:** thin

**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

## Culture

**Light requirement:** full sun, partial sun or partial shade, shade tolerant

**Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; occasionally wet; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

## Other

**Roots:** can form large surface roots

**Winter interest:** no

**Outstanding tree:** no

**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** susceptible

**Pest resistance:** resistant to pests/diseases

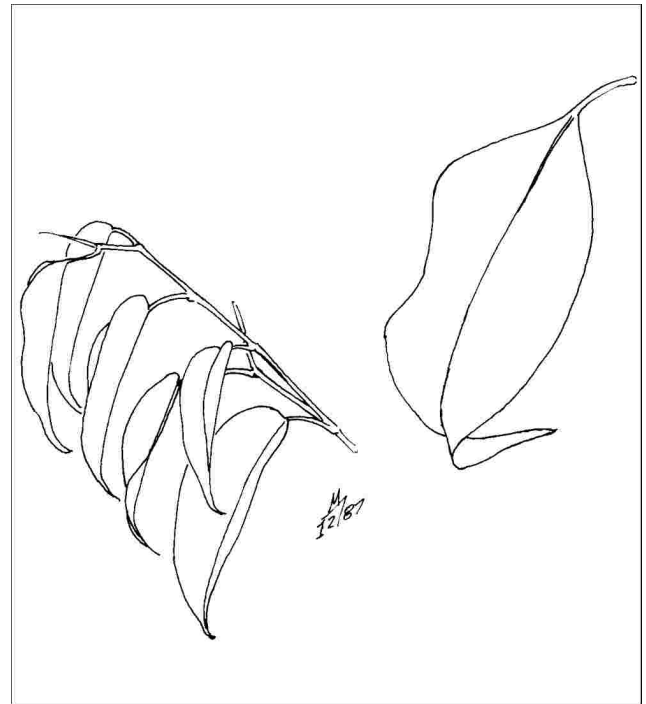


Figure 3. Foliage

## 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 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.

## **Literature Cited**

Fox, A.M., D.R. Gordon, J.A. Dusky, L. Tyson, and R.K. Stocker (2005) IFAS Assessment of the Status of Non-Native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas. Cited from the Internet (November 3, 2006), <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/assessment/>