**Ficus retusa 'Green Gem': 'Green Gem' Cuban-Laurel**

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

---

**Introduction**

This rapidly-growing, rounded, broad-headed, evergreen tree can reach 50 feet or more in height with an equal spread. 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
- **Pronunciation:** FYE-kuss ree-TOO-suh
- **Common name(s):** 'Green Gem' Cuban-Laurel
- **Family:** Moraceae
- **USDA hardiness zones:** 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)
- **Origin:** not native to North America
- **Invasive potential:** invasive non-native
- **Uses:** indoors
- **Availability:** not native to North America

---

**Description**

- **Height:** 45 to 55 feet
- **Spread:** 40 to 55 feet
- **Crown uniformity:** symmetrical
- **Crown shape:** round, vase, spreading

---

2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, former associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. For more information on obtaining other UF/IFAS Extension publications, contact your county’s UF/IFAS Extension office. U.S. Department of Agriculture, UF/IFAS Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A & M University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Nick T. Place, dean for UF/IFAS Extension.
Ficus retusa 'Green Gem': 'Green Gem' Cuban-Laurel

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 color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Culture
Light requirement: full sun, partial sun or partial shade
Soil tolerances: sand; loam; clay; acidic; alkaline; well-drained; occasionally wet
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: free of serious pests and diseases

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.