

# *Ficus rubiginosa*: Rusty Fig<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

This broad, spreading evergreen tree is densely covered with oval, blunt-tipped, three to six-inch-long, medium green, smooth leaves, the undersides of which are brown and hairy. One of the hardiest of the rubber trees, Rusty Fig makes an attractive specimen tree, especially when only a few major branches are allowed to develop creating a more open form. It does not develop the profusion of aerial roots which some others do. Rusty Fig's dense growth habit and moderate growth rate make it better suited for smaller landscapes than most other *Ficus* trees. It grows to about 35 feet in 30-years. It is well-suited as a shade or street tree and should require little maintenance once initial pruning creates a good structural habit. Space major branches along the trunk and keep them trimmed so they remain less than half the diameter of the trunk. It is among the best ficus trees for frost-free climates.

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Ficus rubiginosa*

**Pronunciation:** FYE-kuss roo-bij-ih-NO-suh

**Common name(s):** Rusty Fig

**Family:** *Moraceae*

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

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Invasive potential:** little invasive potential

**Uses:** hedge; indoors; street without sidewalk; screen; shade; specimen; container or planter; parking lot island

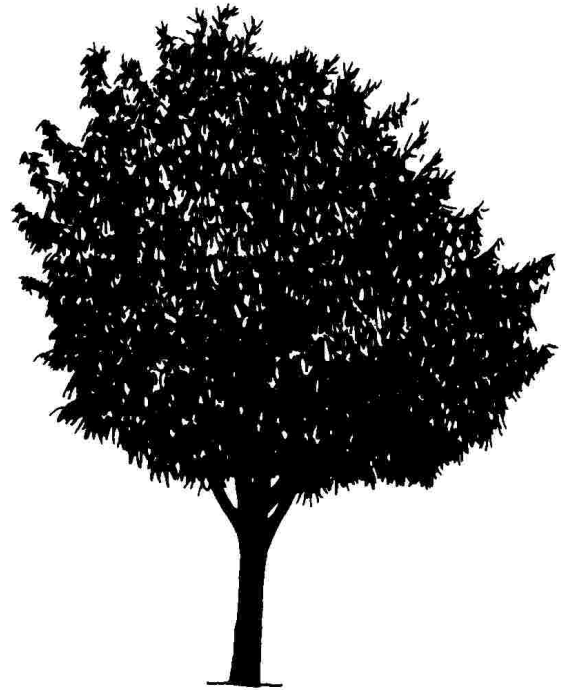


Figure 1. Middle-aged *Ficus rubiginosa*: Rusty Fig

100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; urban tolerant; highway median

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

## Description

**Height:** 35 to 50 feet

**Spread:** 35 to 60 feet

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical

1. This document is ENH416, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date November 1993. Revised December 2006. Reviewed May 2011. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, former associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.



Figure 2. Range

**Crown shape:** round  
**Crown density:** dense  
**Growth rate:** moderate  
**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, broadleaf evergreen  
**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches, 4 to 8 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, .5 to 1 inch  
**Fruit covering:** fleshy  
**Fruit color:** brown  
**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** branches don't droop; not showy; typically one trunk; thorns  
**Pruning requirement:** needed for strong structure  
**Breakage:** resistant  
**Current year twig color:** brown, green  
**Current year twig thickness:** medium  
**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

### Culture

**Light requirement:** partial sun or partial shade, full sun  
**Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; well-drained  
**Drought tolerance:** moderate  
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

### Other

**Roots:** not a problem  
**Winter interest:** no  
**Outstanding tree:** yes  
**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown  
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** unknown  
**Pest resistance:** resistant to pests/diseases

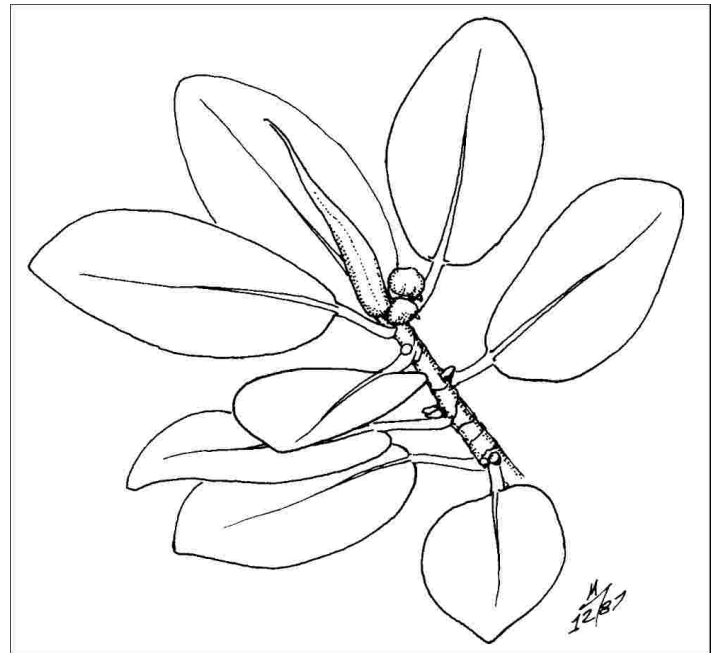


Figure 3. Foliage

### Use and Management

Easily grown in full sun or partial shade, Rusty Fig will thrive on a variety of well-drained soils. Once established, it can withstand periods of drought and 30-degrees F. for a short time.

The cultivar 'Variegata' has leaves variegated with cream-yellow.

Propagation is by cuttings or air layers.

## **Pests**

Two problems are mites and scales.

## **Diseases**

Rusty Fig is subject to root rot on poorly drained soils.