Ficus rubiginosa ‘Variegata’: ‘Variegata’ Rusty Fig

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Introduction
This broad, spreading evergreen tree is densely covered with oval, blunt-tipped, three to six-inch-long, medium green variegated with cream-yellow, 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): ‘Variegata’ 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; urban tolerant; street without sidewalk; screen; shade; specimen; container or planter; parking

Figure 1. Middle-aged Ficus rubiginosa ‘Variegata’: ‘Variegata’ Rusty Fig

Figure 2. Range
lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; highway median
Availability: not native to North America

**Description**
Height: 35 to 40 feet
Spread: 35 to 45 feet
Crown uniformity: symmetrical
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: variegated
Fall color: no color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

![Figure 3. Foliage](image)

**Flower**
Flower color: unknown
Flower characteristics: not showy

**Fruit**
Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: less than .5 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: full sun, partial sun or partial shade
Soil tolerances: sand; loam; clay; acidic; alkaline; 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

**Use and Management**
Rusty Fig can be located along streets and in other urban areas where other Fig trees would grow too big. This one will not grow to become the massive tree that its close relatives will become. It will create dense shade and can shade out turf and other sun-loving plants beneath the canopy. It is nicely suited for planting as a specimen in a landscape bed planted in ground covers and shrubs.

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.

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.