**Introduction**

Often seen as an interior container plant, Rubber Tree has large, 5 to 12-inch-long, thick, glossy evergreen leaves, multiple trunks, and a spreading, irregular canopy. Able to reach 100 feet in height in its native habitat in the jungle but most often seen at about 25 to 40 feet in the landscape, Rubber Tree is useful as a screen, shade, patio, or specimen tree. Its coarse texture makes a strong statement in the landscape. Use as a street tree is limited by the tree's tendency to break apart in strong winds. Perhaps the tree could be made stronger by removing branches with weak tight-angle crotches and spacing major lateral branches along one central trunk. Eliminate multiple trunks early in the life of the tree and prune lateral branches so they remain smaller than half the diameter of the trunk to increase longevity in the landscape.

**General Information**

**Scientific name:** *Ficus elastica*  
**Pronunciation:** FYE-kuss ee-LASS-tick-uh  
**Common name(s):** Rubber Tree, India-Rubber Fig  
**Family:** Moraceae  
**USDA hardiness zones:** 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)  
**Origin:** not native to North America  
**Invasive potential:** invasive non-native  
**Uses:** shade; trained as a standard; indoors; screen; specimen; deck or patio; container or planter; espalier; highway median  
**Availability:** not native to North America

![Figure 1. Young *Ficus elastica*: Rubber Tree](image)  
*Credits: Ed Gilman*

![Figure 2. Range](image)
**Description**

Height: 30 to 45 feet  
Spread: 25 to 30 feet  
Crown uniformity: symmetrical  
Crown shape: oval  
Crown density: dense  
Growth rate: fast  
Texture: coarse

**Foliage**

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)  
Leaf type: simple  
Leaf margin: entire  
Leaf shape: elliptic (oval)  
Leaf venation: pinnate, brachidodrome  
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen, broadleaf evergreen  
Leaf blade length: 8 to 12 inches  
Leaf color: green  
Fall color: no color change  
Fall characteristic: not showy

**Trunk and Branches**

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically one trunk; thorns  
Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure  
Breakage: susceptible to breakage  
Current year twig color: green  
Current year twig thickness: thick  
Wood specific gravity: unknown

**Culture**

Light requirement: full sun, partial sun or partial shade  
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: unknown  
Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

**Use and Management**

Rubber Tree will grow quickly in sun or partial shade on almost any well-drained soil. The soil should be allowed to become fairly dry between waterings, especially in containers. Rubber Tree makes a nice house plant if it is not over-watered.

Available cultivars include: ‘Doescheri’ has yellow-variegated leaves; ‘Decora’ produces broad, reddish-green leaves with ivory-colored veins running down center of leaf; ‘Variegata’ has light green leaves with white or yellow margins.

Propagation is by layering or cuttings.

**Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern but occasionally scales are a problem.