**Ficus retusa: Cuban-Laurel**¹
Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

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**Introduction**

This rapidly-growing, rounded, broad-headed, evergreen tree (also known as *Ficus microcarpa*) 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 are 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.

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**General Information**

- **Scientific name:** *Ficus retusa*
- **Pronunciation:** FYE-kuss ree-TOO-suh
- **Common name(s):** 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

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**Description**

- **Height:** 50 to 60 feet
- **Spread:** 40 to 60 feet
- **Crown uniformity:** symmetrical
- **Crown shape:** round, vase, spreading

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Figure 1. Mature *Ficus retusa*: Cuban-Laurel
Credits: Ed Gilman

Figure 2. Range

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**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

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

### Trunk and Branches
- **Trunk/bark/branches:** branches don’t 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  
- **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

### Use and Management
Growing easily in full sun or partial shade, Cuban-Laurel thrives on various well-drained soils and is moderately salt-tolerant.

The cultivar ‘Green Gem’ is resistant to thrips and is commonly available.

The 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.

Propagation is by cuttings or air layerings.

### Pests
Scales and thrips are problems. Thrips often infest the foliage but will not kill the plant.

### Diseases
No diseases are of major concern.
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