

Ficus lyrata: Fiddleleaf Fig¹

Edward F. Gilman, Dennis G. Watson, Ryan W. Klein, Andrew K. Koeser, Deborah R. Hilbert, and Drew C. McLean²

Introduction

A 25 to 50-foot-tall, evergreen tree of upright-spreading, irregular growth, fiddleleaf fig produces 8 to 15-inch-long and 10-inch-wide, dull green, thick, fiddle-shaped leaves which are quite attractive. The trunk can grow to several feet thick. Most trees in the landscape are 15 to 25 feet tall. Larger ones sometimes break apart in strong winds due to tight branch crotches and embedded bark. Corrective pruning early in the life of the tree can help prevent this from occurring. Plant them in a place protected from the wind, such as a courtyard to increase longevity in the landscape.

General Information

Scientific name: Ficus lyrata

Pronunciation: FYE-kuss lye-RAY-tuh **Common name(s):** Fiddleleaf fig

Family: *Moraceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Figure 2)
Origin: native to tropical western and central Africa
UF/IFAS Invasive Assessment Status: not considered a
problem species at this time, may be recommended (North,
Central, South)

Uses: indoors; deck or patio; specimen; container or planter; espalier; highway median; street without sidewalk; shade

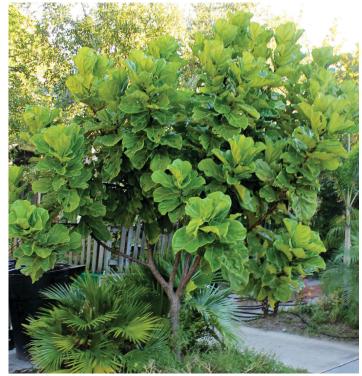


Figure 1. Full Form—Ficus lyrata: Fiddleleaf fig

- 1. This document is ENH413, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date November 1993. Revised March 2007 and December 2018. Visit the EDIS website at https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu for the currently supported version of this publication.
- 2. Edward F. Gilman, professor emeritus, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, former associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department; Ryan W. Klein, graduate assistant, Environmental Horticulture Department; Andrew K. Koeser, assistant professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, UF/IFAS Gulf Coast Research and Education Center; Deborah R. Hilbert, graduate assistant, Environmental Horticulture Department, GCREC; and Drew C. McLean, biological scientist, Environmental Horticulture Department, GCREC; 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.



Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 25 to 50 feet **Spread:** 25 to 35 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular

Crown shape: vase, round, spreading

Crown density: moderate **Growth rate:** moderate

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: undulate, entire

Leaf shape: obovate

Leaf venation: pinnate, brachidodrome

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen, broadleaf evergreen

Leaf blade length: 8 to 15 inches

Leaf color: dull green on top, paler green underneath

Fall color: no color change **Fall characteristic:** not showy



Figure 3. Leaf—Ficus lyrata: Fiddleleaf fig

Flower

Flower color: unknown

Flower characteristics: not showy; emerges in clusters

inside of the syconium produced by this tree

Fruit

Fruit shape: round Fruit length: ½ inch

Fruit covering: fleshy fig with creamy white dots **Fruit color:** turns from green to red when ripe

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; not showy;

fruit/leaves a litter problem



Figure 4. Fruit—Ficus lyrata: Fiddleleaf fig

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically one trunk; no thorns; broken stems excrete a milky sap **Bark:** brown, flaky, becoming gray and smooth with age **Pruning requirement:** needed for strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown Current year twig thickness: thick Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun to partial shade

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; occasion-

ally wet but well-drained **Drought tolerance:** high

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: not a problem
Winter interest: no
Outstanding tree: no
Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown

Ficus lyrata: Fiddleleaf Fig

Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

Use and Management

Fiddleleaf fig can be used in containers when young or can be planted to make a striking specimen tree. They create quite an accent by a patio or in shrub bed because of the coarse leaf texture. Due to their large size, the leaves can be a nuisance to some people when they fall but there are never too many of them.

Fiddleleaf fig will grow moderately fast in full sun or partial shade on any well-drained soil and should receive regular watering. Be sure to cut roots circling the container before planting since these can cause the tree to become unstable as it grows older. There are some aerial roots produced from the branches but not as many as on some other *Ficus* species, such as *Ficus benjamina*.

Propagation is by layering and cuttings.

Pests and Diseases

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

Reference

Koeser, A.K., Friedman, M.H., Hasing, G., Finley, H., Schelb, J. 2017. Trees: South Florida and the Keys. Gainesville: University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.



Figure 5. Bark—*Ficus lyrata*: Fiddleleaf fig Credits: Gitta Hasing