UF IFAS Extension UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

ENH417

Ficus rubiginosa 'Variegata': 'Variegata' Rusty Fig[1]

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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.

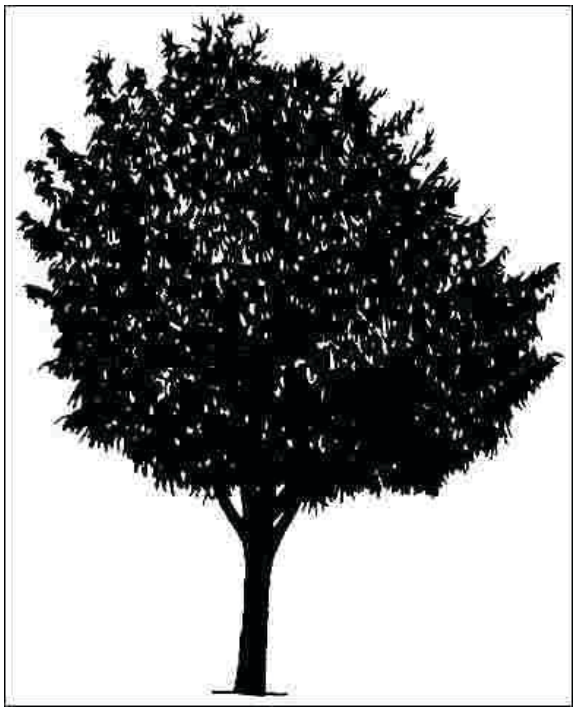

Figure 1. Middle-aged *Ficus rubiginosa* 'Variegata': 'Variegata' rusty fig. Credits: UF/IFAS

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 (Figure 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: not assessed/incomplete assessment

Uses: hedge; indoors; urban tolerant; street without sidewalk; screen; shade; specimen; container or planter; parking lot island 100–200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; highway median

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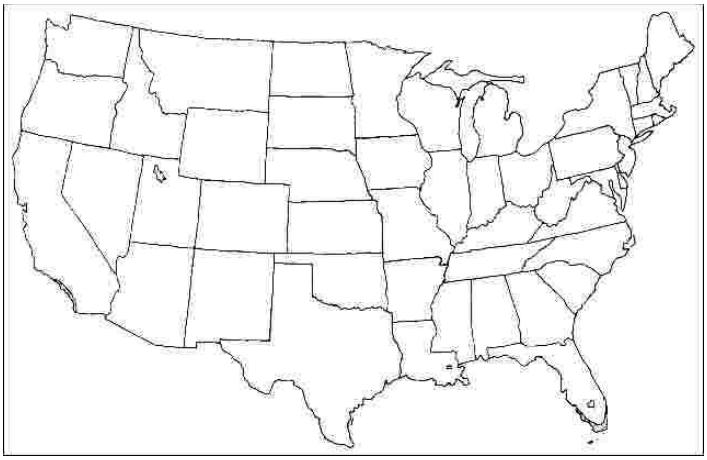

Figure 2. Range.
Credits: UF/IFAS

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 (Figure 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

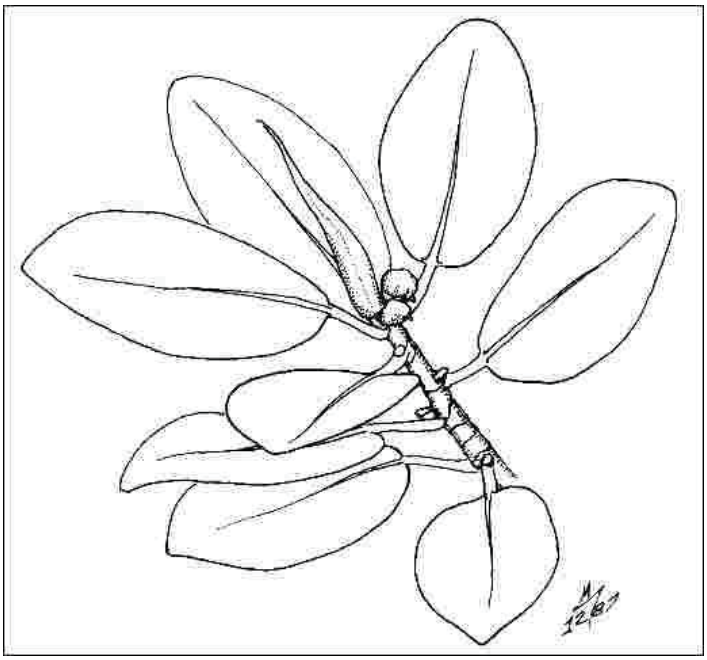

Figure 3. Foliage.
Credits: UF/IFAS

Flower

Flower color: unknown

Flower characteristics: not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: less than 0.5 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°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.