**Introduction**

Few shrubs are available with as great a variety of beautiful leaf colors and shape as Croton (Fig. 1). From ribbon-like strands to long, broad leaves, Croton offers a multitude of choices. Color patterns range from multicolored spots to irregular color patches or solid-colored leaves with contrasting veins. Virtually any color combination is possible, depending upon cultivar. Capable of reaching 12 feet in height, Croton is usually seen at three to five feet in height and is well-suited to use as a foundation, accent, specimen, or container planting. There are fine examples of Croton used as a hedge but this much color in a landscape is sometimes overpowering to the senses.

**General Information**

**Scientific name:** *Codiaeum variegatum*  
**Pronunciation:** koe-dih-EE-um vair-ee-egg-GAY-tum  
**Common name(s):** Croton  
**Family:** Euphorbiaceae  
**Plant type:** shrub  
**USDA hardiness zones:** 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)  
**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round  
**Origin:** not native to North America  
**Uses:** hedge; border; mass planting; container or above-ground planter; suitable for growing indoors; accent; screen; attracts butterflies  
**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

**Figure 1. Croton.**

**Description**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Height:</th>
<th>3 to 8 feet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spread:</td>
<td>3 to 6 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant habit:</td>
<td>upright; oval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant density:</td>
<td>moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth rate:</td>
<td>slow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texture:</td>
<td>coarse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Codiaeum variegatum -- Croton

Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: spiral
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: lobed; undulate
Leaf shape: ovate
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches
Leaf color: yellow; purple or red
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: unknown
Flower characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: unknown
Fruit cover: dry or hard
Fruit color: brown
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems
Current year stem/twig color: reddish
Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun
Soil tolerances: acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay
Drought tolerance: high
Soil salt tolerances: unknown
Plant spacing: 24 to 36 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem
Winter interest: plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

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**Outstanding plant:** plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

### Use and Management

Croton displays its best leaf color when grown in full sun but can tolerate light, dappled shade. Croton is tolerant of a wide range of soils as long as it is well-drained.

Some of the available cultivars offering a wide variety of leaf color and shape include: ‘Andreasum’, broad yellow leaves; ‘Angustissimum’, narrow leaves with yellow margins and ribs; ‘Aucubifolium’, broad yellow, red-blotched leaves; ‘Aureo-maculatum’, green leaves spotted yellow; ‘Interruptum’, sometimes twisted, yellow leaves with red midrib; ‘Sanderi’, broad leaves, irregularly blotched; ‘Spirale’, red and green spirally-twisted leaves; ‘Weismannii’, narrow, wavy-margined leaves, variegated with yellow, red petiole.

Propagation is by air-layering or cuttings.

Scales, thrips, mealybugs, and mites.

### Pests and Diseases

Root rot in poorly-drained soils.