



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Codiaeum variegatum*¹

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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

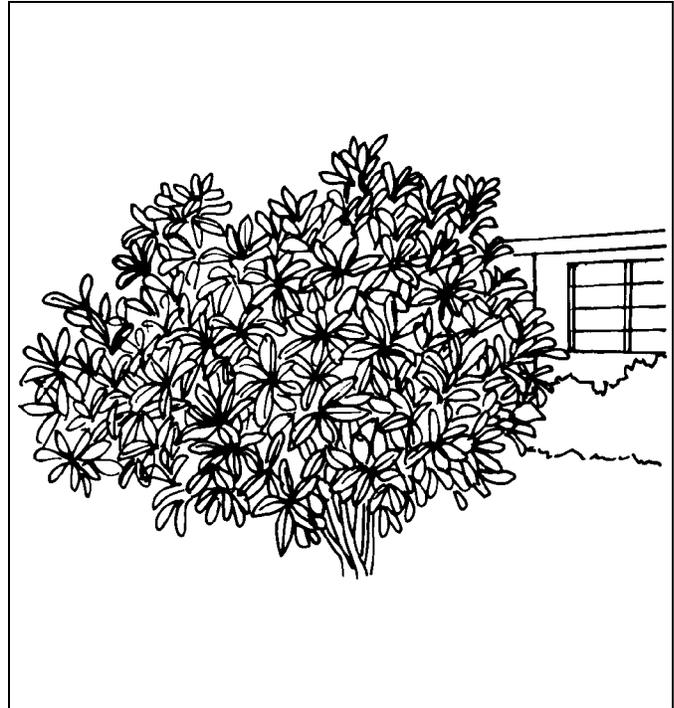


Figure 1. Croton.

Description

Height: 3 to 8 feet

Spread: 3 to 6 feet

Plant habit: upright; oval

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: slow

Texture: coarse

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-134, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1999. Please visit the EDIS web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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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

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: 'Andreanum', 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.

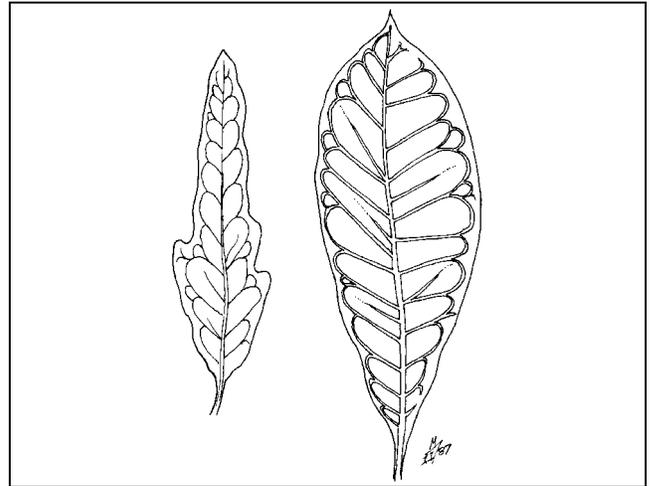


Figure 3. Foliage of Croton