



# *Ficus benjamina* Weeping Fig<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

This is a huge tree growing to 60 feet tall and 60 to 70 feet wide (Fig. 1). The dense, rounded canopy and gracefully drooping branches of Weeping Fig made it quite popular as a landscape tree until recently. The thick, shiny, two to five-inch-long, evergreen leaves generously clothe the long branches, and the tiny figs eventually turn a deep red. Branches will weep toward the ground forming a canopy so dense that nothing grows beneath it.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Ficus benjamina*

**Pronunciation:** FYE-kuss ben-juh-MYE-nuh

**Common name(s):** Weeping Fig

**Family:** *Moraceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** Bonsai; container or above-ground planter; hedge; suitable for growing indoors; trainable as a standard; no proven urban tolerance

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

## DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 45 to 60 feet

**Spread:** 60 to 100 feet

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

**Crown shape:** round; spreading; weeping

**Crown density:** dense

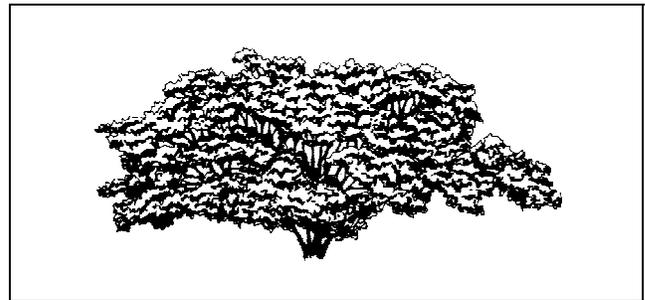


Figure 1. Middle-aged Weeping Fig.

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** fine

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire; undulate

**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval); ovate

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

## Flower

**Flower characteristics:** inconspicuous and not showy

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-251, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.
2. Edward F. Gilman, associate professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** round  
**Fruit length:** < .5 inch  
**Fruit covering:** fleshy  
**Fruit color:** red  
**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; showy trunk; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns  
**Pruning requirement:** requires pruning to develop strong structure  
**Breakage:** resistant  
**Current year twig color:** gray  
**Current year twig thickness:** thin

**Culture**

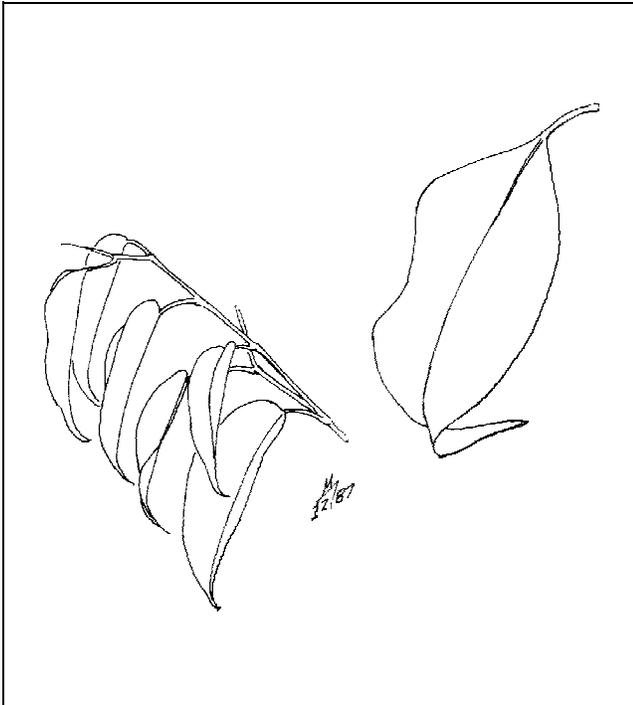
**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in the shade; tree grows in full sun  
**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; occasionally wet; alkaline; well-drained  
**Drought tolerance:** high  
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

**Other**

**Roots:** surface roots can lift sidewalks or interfere with mowing  
**Winter interest:** no special winter interest  
**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding  
**Invasive potential:** No entries found.  
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** susceptible  
**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

Fruit can stain cars and sidewalks so the tree should not be planted close to streets, walks or parking lots. It also makes quite a mess around the tree as the fruit fall to the ground. The tree is much too large for



**Figure 3.** Foliage of Weeping Fig.

residential planting unless it is used as a hedge or clipped screen, but can be seen growing into massive trees in parks and other large-scale areas. Aerial roots descend from the branches, touch the ground and take root, eventually forming numerous sturdy trunks which can clog a landscape. Trees can grow to be quite large and spreading in this fashion. Roots grow rapidly invading gardens, growing under and lifting sidewalks, patios, and driveways.

There have been recent reports of fertile fruit germinating in some landscapes in south Florida. This is of concern since this could give the tree the potential of spreading and perhaps becoming a pesty weed, something which is definitely not needed in south Florida.

Able to tolerate severe pruning, Weeping Fig can also be successfully used as a clipped hedge or screen and is probably best used in this fashion, or can be trained into an espalier or topiary. Young trees are often grown in containers, appearing on patios, at entranceways, or indoors.

Weeping Fig will grow in full sun or partial shade on any well-drained soil. Plants should be carefully watered when young and later during droughts. Plants are very frost-sensitive.

The cultivar 'Exotica' has wavy-edged leaves with long, twisted tips. There are other *Ficus* such as *Ficus rubiginosa* which do not produce aerial roots and are much better suited as landscape trees for shade because they will not take over the landscape as will Weeping Fig.

Propagation is by cuttings or layering.

### **Pests**

Weeping Fig may be infected by scales, but is resistant to leaf thrips which will distort new leaves on some other figs.

### **Diseases**

No diseases are of major concern.