



## *Ficus elastica* 'Variegata' 'Variegata' Rubber Tree<sup>1</sup>

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### INTRODUCTION

Often seen as an interior container plant, Variegated Rubber Tree has large, 5 to 12-inch-long, thick, light green leaves with white or yellow margins, multiple trunks, and a spreading, irregular canopy (Fig. 1). Able to reach 100 feet in height in its native habitat in the jungle but most often seen at about 25 to 40 feet in the landscape, Rubber Tree is useful as a screen, shade, patio, or specimen tree. Its coarse texture makes a strong statement in the landscape. Use as a street tree is limited by the tree's tendency to break apart in high winds. Perhaps the tree could be made stronger by removing branches with weak tight-angle crotches and spacing major lateral branches along one central trunk. Eliminate multiple trunks early in the life of the tree and prune lateral branches so they remain smaller than half the diameter of the trunk to increase longevity in the landscape.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Ficus elastica* 'Variegata'

**Pronunciation:** FYE-kuss ee-LASS-tick-uh

**Common name(s):** 'Variegata' Rubber Tree, 'Variegata' India-Rubber Fig

**Family:** *Moraceae*

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

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; espalier; suitable for growing indoors; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; screen; trainable as a standard; shade tree; specimen; no proven urban tolerance



Figure 1. Young 'Variegata' Rubber Tree.

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

### DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 30 to 45 feet

**Spread:** 25 to 30 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette

**Crown shape:** oval

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Crown density:** dense

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** coarse

### Foliage

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

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval)

**Leaf venation:** banchidodrome; pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** broadleaf evergreen;  
evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** 8 to 12 inches

**Leaf color:** variegated

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower characteristics:** inconspicuous and not  
showy

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** < .5 inch

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** green

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife;  
inconspicuous and not showy; fruit, twigs, or foliage  
cause significant litter

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** droop as the tree grows, and  
will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian  
clearance beneath the canopy; not particularly showy;

should be grown with a single leader; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** requires pruning to develop  
strong structure

**Breakage:** susceptible to breakage either at the crotch  
due to poor collar formation, or the wood itself is  
weak and tends to break

**Current year twig color:** green

**Current year twig thickness:** thick

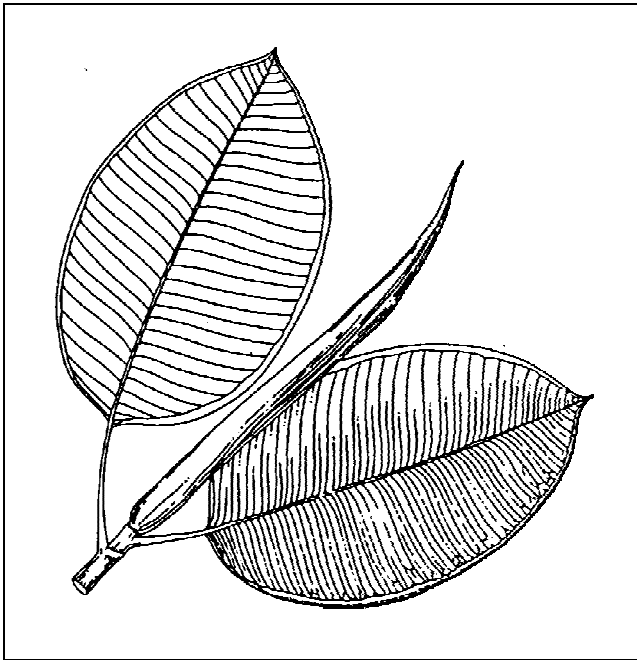


Figure 3. Foliage of 'Variegata' Rubber Tree.

Propagation is by layering or cuttings.

### Pests and Diseases

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

### Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun;  
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.

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

### USE AND MANAGEMENT

Rubber Tree will grow quickly in sun or partial shade on almost any well-drained soil. The soil should be allowed to become fairly dry between waterings, especially in containers. Rubber Tree makes a nice house plant if it is not over-watered.

Other available cultivars include: 'Doescheri' has yellow-variegated leaves; 'Decora' produces broad, reddish-green leaves with ivory-colored veins running down center of leaf;