



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## ***Ligustrum sinense* 'Variegatum'<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Introduction**

A cultivar of the green-leaved ligustrum, Variegated Ligustrum is common in many landscapes in the southeastern part of the United States. Creamy-white and green foliage fills the canopy of this quick-growing shrub all year long. The thin twigs become weighted down with the foliage forming a weeping vase on unpruned specimens. Bright white flowers are borne in the spring at the ends of the new grow putting on an unexpected show in mid- to late-spring, especially on plants that have reverted back to green foliage. Flowers are most showy on plants with little variegation. Portions of the plant occasionally revert back to green foliage. When this happens, it can appear as though there are two different plants growing in the same spot.

### **General Information**

**Scientific name:** *Ligustrum sinense* 'Variegatum'

**Pronunciation:** lig-GUS-strum sye-NEN-see

**Common name(s):** Variegated Chinese Privet

**Family:** *Oleaceae*

**Plant type:** tree

**USDA hardiness zones:** 7B through 10 (Fig. 1)

**Planting month for zone 7:** year round

**Planting month for zone 8:** year round

**Planting month for zone 9:** year round

**Planting month for zone 10:** year round

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; trained as a standard; hedge; specimen; border; mass planting; screen

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

### **Description**

**Height:** 10 to 20 feet

**Spread:** 8 to 15 feet

**Plant habit:** round

**Plant density:** dense

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** fine

#### **Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval)

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches

**Leaf color:** variegated

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

#### **Flower**

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristic:** unpleasant fragrance; spring flowering

#### **Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** oval

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Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Fruit length:** less than .5 inch  
**Fruit cover:** fleshy  
**Fruit color:** black  
**Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; can be trained to grow with a short, single trunk; not particularly showy  
**Current year stem/twig color:** reddish  
**Current year stem/twig thickness:** thin

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun  
**Soil tolerances:** acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay;  
**Drought tolerance:** moderate  
**Soil salt tolerances:** poor  
**Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

**Other**

**Roots:** usually not a problem  
**Winter interest:** no special winter interest  
**Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding  
**Invasive potential:** potentially invasive  
**Pest resistance:** no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

**Use and Management**

With proper training, plants can be pruned into small trees with a nice vase shape. Plants can also be trained into a single-stemmed specimen with foliage originating at about 3 or 4 feet from the ground. Although this is rarely done, it is a nice way to produce an unusual specimen. The tallest plants have grown to 24-feet-tall.

When maintaining this shrub as a clipped hedge, keep the top on the hedge slightly more narrow than the bottom to allow light to reach foliage near the ground. This will help keep the plant full all the way to the ground. Most homeowners plant this shrub too close to the house. Its large size makes it best suited for maintaining it in a shrub border, not along a residential foundation.

Most soils support Ligustrum. Avoid those that remain wet for long periods. There are reports of plants escaping cultivation and establishing themselves in the woods. Birds reportedly help spread the seeds.

**Pests and Diseases**

Few pests both this plant.