



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

***Ligustrum sinense* 'Variegatum'**¹

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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.