



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## *Vitex trifolia* 'Variegata'<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman<sup>2</sup>

### Introduction

This fast growing shrub is popular for its variegated foliage and pretty blue flowers (Fig. 1). *Vitex* will reach a height of 10 to 12 feet and quickly becomes tree-like if neglected or trained to encourage multi-trunk development. However, this plant creates a nice, dense shrub if it is properly pruned and will be nearly prostrate if planted on a sandy beach. The trifoliate evergreen leaves are gray-green with white marginal variegation. These soft leaves have grayish pubescence on their underside and smell pungent when crushed. Attractive blue or lavender flowers with white spots appear in terminal clusters during the summertime. These beautiful flowers are followed by small, brown drupes.

### General Information

**Scientific name:** *Vitex trifolia* 'Variegata'

**Pronunciation:** VYE-tecks try-FOLE-lee-uh

**Common name(s):** Variegated Vitex

**Family:** *Verbenaceae*

**Plant type:** shrub

**USDA hardiness zones:** 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)

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

**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; trained as a standard

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

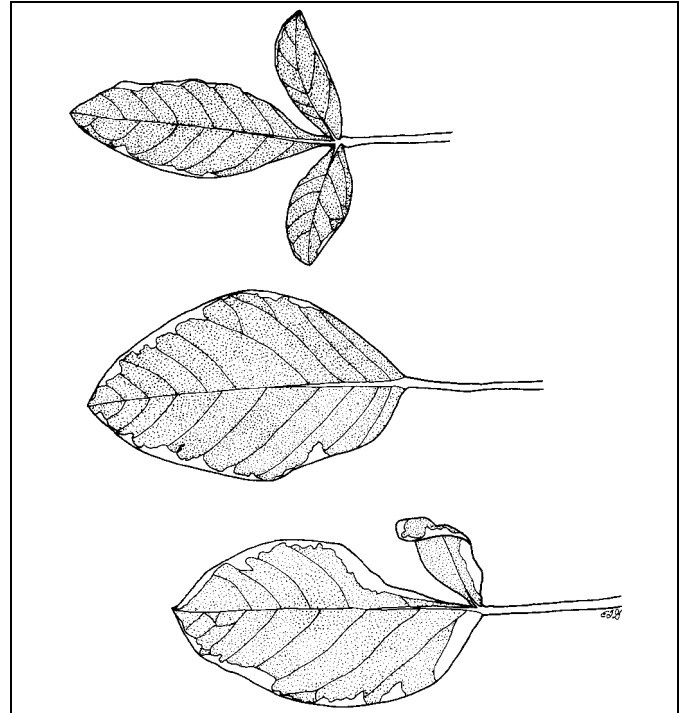


Figure 1. Variegated Vitex.

### Description

**Height:** 10 to 20 feet

**Spread:** 8 to 12 feet

**Plant habit:** round

**Plant density:** dense

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** fine

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-611, 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>.
2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap, or national origin. For information on obtaining other extension publications, contact your county Cooperative Extension Service office. Florida Cooperative Extension Service / Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences / University of Florida / Christine Taylor Waddill, Dean



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite  
**Leaf type:** trifoliate  
**Leaf margin:** entire  
**Leaf shape:** oblong  
**Leaf venation:** pinnate  
**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen; fragrant  
**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches  
**Leaf color:** variegated  
**Fall color:** no fall color change  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** blue  
**Flower characteristic:** summer flowering

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** unknown  
**Fruit length:** unknown  
**Fruit cover:** unknown  
**Fruit color:** brown

**Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

### Trunk and Branches

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

### Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in full sun  
**Soil tolerances:** alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam  
**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:** 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

*Vitex trifolia* 'Variegata' creates a wonderful hedge, screen, and border. It is commonly planted in mass but also makes a great specimen plant. Rapidly growing out of bounds as a shrub, *Vitex* should be used in a large space or where its weedy growth can be easily pruned, although pruning reduces the flower display. *Vitex* works well as a screen or in a large-scale shrub border. It also is well suited for planting in a container where it looks nice trained into a small tree.

To obtain an attractive, compact hedge, plant this shrub in full sun. *Vitex* also needs a well-drained, but moist, sandy soil. It is moderately drought tolerant and will endure some salt spray. *Vitex* is high maintenance in terms of pruning and should be fertilized twice a year. It is not cold tolerant and needs a protected location in central Florida.

*Vitex* is commonly propagated by cuttings during the summer.

### Pests and Diseases

Mushroom root rot and mites are frequent problems for *Vitex*.