



## *Ficus aurea* Strangler Fig<sup>1</sup>

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### INTRODUCTION

Often starting out as an epiphyte nestled in the limbs of another tree, the native Strangler Fig is vine-like while young, later strangling its host with heavy aerial roots and eventually becoming a self-supporting, independent tree (Fig. 1). Not recommended for small landscapes, Strangler Fig grows quickly and can reach 60 feet in height with an almost equal spread. The broad, spreading, lower limbs are festooned with secondary roots which create many slim but rigid trunks once they reach the ground and take hold. They become a maintenance headache as these roots need to be removed to keep a neat-looking landscape. The shiny, thick, dark green leaves create dense shade and the surface roots add to the problem of maintaining a lawn beneath this massive tree. The fruit drops and makes a mess beneath the tree.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Ficus aurea*  
**Pronunciation:** FYE-kuss AR-ee-uh  
**Common name(s):** Strangler Fig, Golden Fig  
**Family:** *Moraceae*  
**USDA hardiness zones:** 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)  
**Origin:** native to North America  
**Uses:** Bonsai; suitable for growing indoors; reclamation plant; no proven urban tolerance  
**Availability:** grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

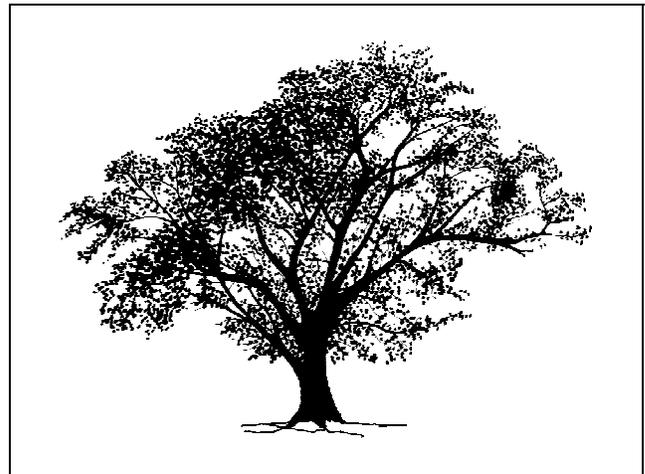


Figure 1. Mature Strangler Fig.

### DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 50 to 60 feet  
**Spread:** 50 to 70 feet  
**Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette  
**Crown shape:** round; spreading  
**Crown density:** dense  
**Growth rate:** fast  
**Texture:** coarse

### 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:** broadleaf evergreen; evergreen

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower characteristics:** inconspicuous and not showy

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** oval; round

**Fruit length:** < .5 inch

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** green; yellow

**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:** green

**Current year twig thickness:** medium

### 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

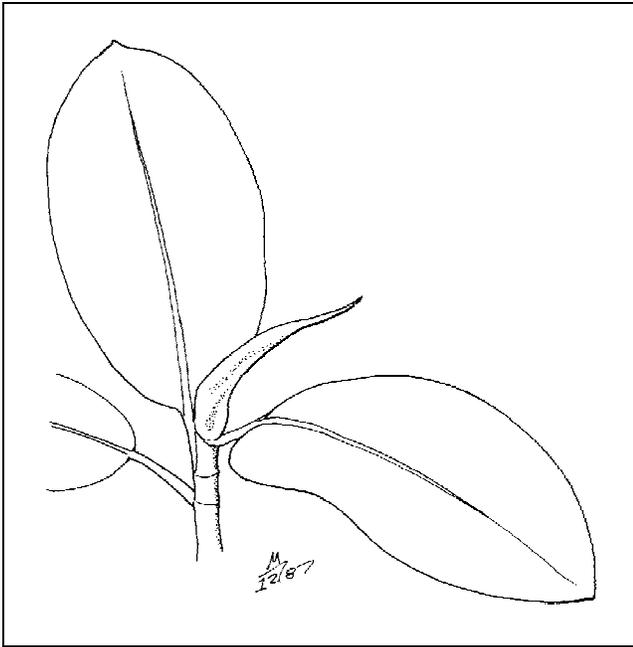
**Roots:** surface roots can lift sidewalks or interfere with mowing

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** seeds itself into the landscape

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



**Figure 3.** Foliage of Strangler Fig.

### **USE AND MANAGEMENT**

Easily grown in full sun or partial shade, Strangler Fig can literally be planted, watered a few times, and forgotten. A variety of soils, including wet, will do, and Strangler Fig is moderately salt-tolerant. More often than not, large Strangler Figs were existing trees, not planted. Seeds germinate easily in the landscape allowing the tree to invade nearby land.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

### **Pests**

Primary pests are aphids and scales followed by sooty mold.

### **Diseases**

No diseases are of major concern.