



## *Ficus rubiginosa* Rusty Fig<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

This broad, spreading evergreen tree is densely covered with oval, blunt-tipped, three to six-inch-long, medium green, smooth leaves, the undersides of which are brown and hairy (Fig. 1). One of the hardiest of the rubber trees, Rusty Fig makes an attractive specimen tree, especially when only a few major branches are allowed to develop creating a more open form. It does not develop the profusion of aerial roots which some others do. Rusty Fig's dense growth habit and moderate growth rate make it better suited for smaller landscapes than most other *Ficus* trees. It grows to about 35 feet in 30-years. It is well-suited as a shade or street tree and should require little maintenance once initial pruning creates a good structural habit. Space major branches along the trunk and keep them trimmed so they remain less than half the diameter of the trunk. It is among the best ficus trees for frost-free climates.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Ficus rubiginosa*

**Pronunciation:** FYE-kuss roo-bij-ih-NO-suh

**Common name(s):** Rusty Fig

**Family:** *Moraceae*

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

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; hedge; suitable for growing indoors; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the

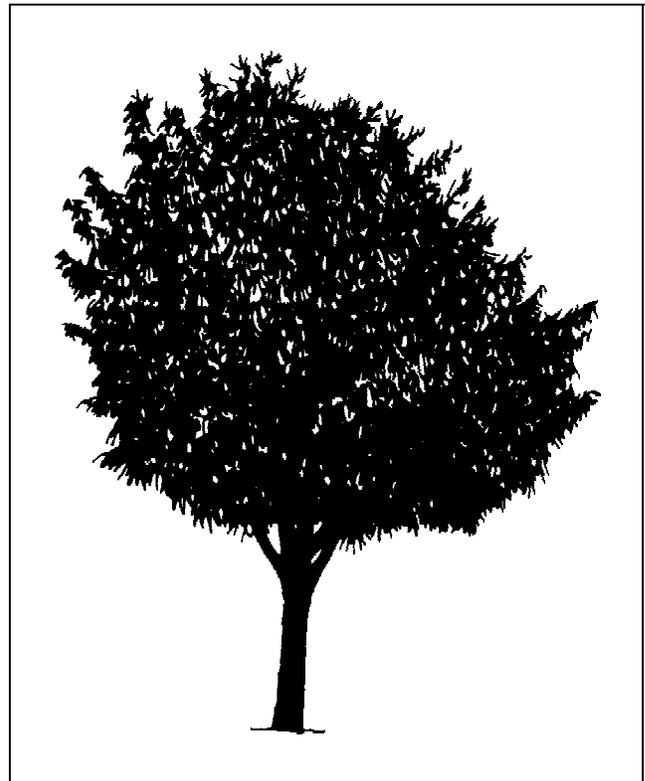


Figure 1. Middle-aged Rusty Fig.

highway; screen; shade tree; specimen; residential street tree; tree has been successfully grown in urban areas where air pollution, poor drainage, compacted soil, and/or drought are common

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

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2. Edward F. Gilman, associate professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

## DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 35 to 50 feet

**Spread:** 35 to 60 feet

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

**Crown shape:** round

**Crown density:** dense

**Growth rate:** medium

**Texture:** medium

## Foliage

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

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval)

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

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

**Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches; 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

## Flower

**Flower characteristics:** inconspicuous and not showy

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch; < .5 inch

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** brown

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; grow mostly upright and will not droop; not particularly showy; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns

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

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** brown; green

**Current year twig thickness:** medium

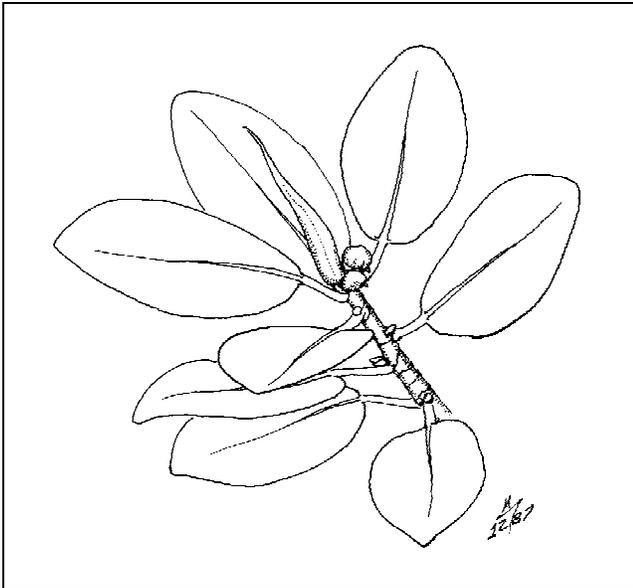


Figure 3. Foliage of Rusty Fig.

### Pests

Two problems are mites and scales.

### Diseases

Rusty Fig is subject to root rot on poorly drained soils.

### Culture

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

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline;  
well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

### Other

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding tree:** tree has outstanding ornamental  
features and could be planted more

**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time

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

## USE AND MANAGEMENT

Easily grown in full sun or partial shade, Rusty Fig will thrive on a variety of well-drained soils. Once established, it can withstand periods of drought and 30-degrees F. for a short time.

The cultivar 'Variegata' has leaves variegated with cream-yellow.

Propagation is by cuttings or air layers.