



Ficus rubiginosa 'Variegata' 'Variegata' Rusty Fig¹

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INTRODUCTION

This broad, spreading evergreen tree is densely covered with oval, blunt-tipped, three to six-inch-long, medium green variegated with cream-yellow, 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* 'Variegata'

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

Common name(s): 'Variegata' 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

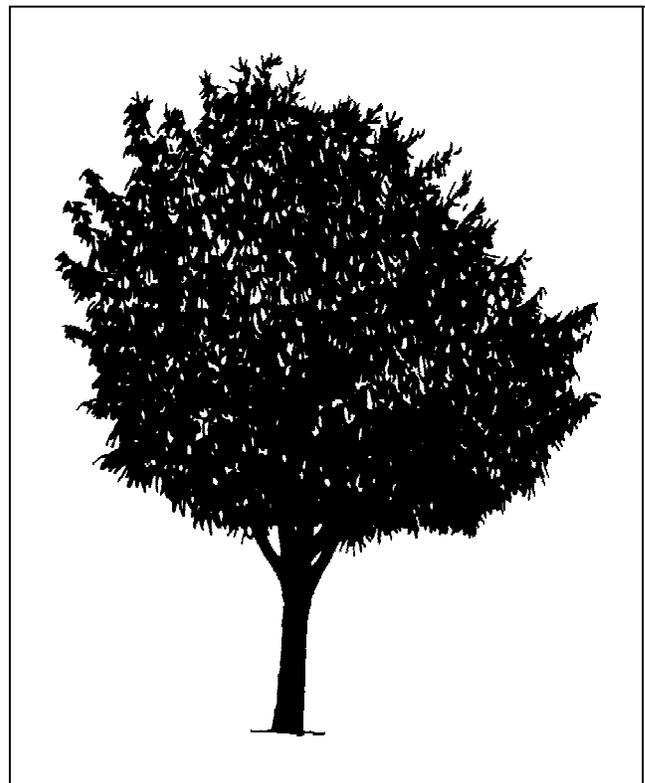


Figure 1. Middle-aged 'Variegata' Rusty Fig.

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: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 35 to 40 feet

Spread: 35 to 45 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: variegated

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: < .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

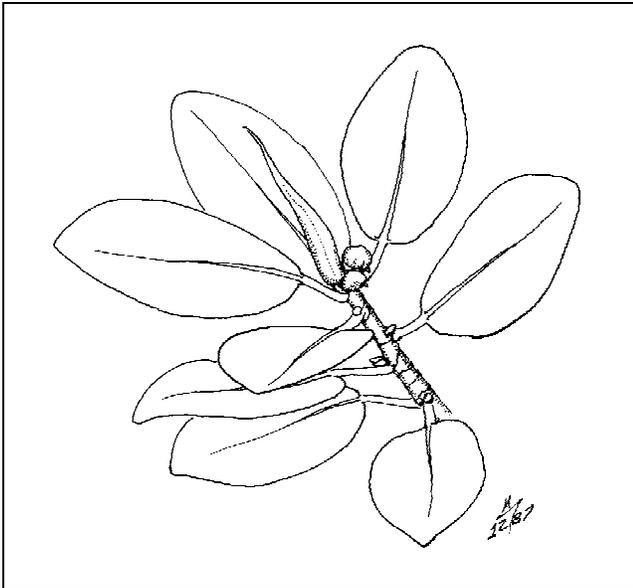


Figure 3. Foliage of 'Variegata' Rusty Fig.

Propagation is by cuttings or air layers.

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

Rusty Fig can be located along streets and in other urban areas where other Fig trees would grow too big. This one will not grow to become the massive tree that its close relatives will become. It will create dense shade and can shade out turf and other sun-loving plants beneath the canopy. It is nicely suited for planting as a specimen in a landscape bed planted in ground covers and shrubs.

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.