



Ligustrum japonicum 'Variegatum' 'Variegatum' Japanese Privet¹

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INTRODUCTION

Although often used as a shrub or hedge, Japanese Privet works well when allowed to grow into a small tree, its curved multiple trunks and variegated canopy creating an interesting architectural focus, 8 to 12 feet tall and often considerably wider, for the landscape (Fig. 1). Old specimens often grow to 25 feet across. The glossy evergreen leaves are abundantly produced on the upright, spreading branches. The small, white, malodorous flowers appear in terminal panicles during spring in the south and in the summer in northern climes. The blooms are followed by abundant blue-black berries which persist most of the year. The berries are popular with birds and the dispersed seeds occasionally germinate where they fall but this is usually not a nuisance.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Ligustrum japonicum* 'Variegatum'

Pronunciation: lih-GUS-trum juh-PAWN-ih-kum

Common name(s): 'Variegatum' Japanese Privet

Family: *Oleaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 7B through 10A (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: Bonsai; container or above-ground planter; hedge; 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); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; screen; trainable as a standard; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); narrow tree

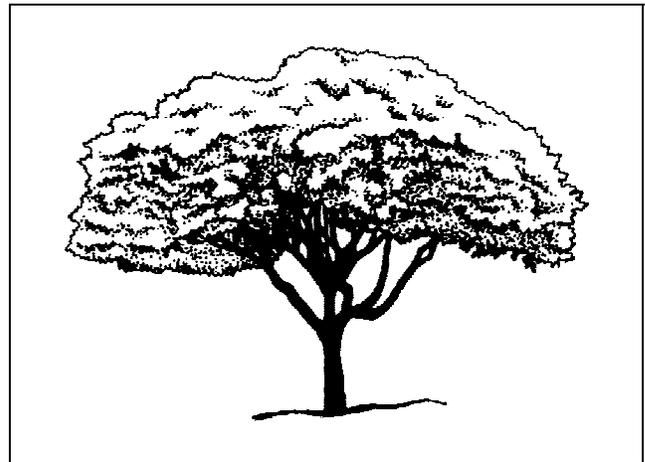


Figure 1. Mature 'Variegatum' Japanese Privet.

lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance

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

DESCRIPTION

Height: 8 to 12 feet

Spread: 15 to 25 feet

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

Crown shape: round; spreading; vase shape

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: medium

Texture: medium

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire; undulate

Leaf shape: oblong; ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen;
evergreen

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches; less than 2 inches

Leaf color: variegated

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: showy; spring flowering;
summer flowering; unpleasant fragrance

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval; round

Fruit length: < .5 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: black; blue; purple

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; inconspicuous
and not showy; no significant litter problem; persistent
on the tree

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; routinely
grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple
trunks; showy trunk; no thorns

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop
strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: green; gray

Current year twig thickness: medium

Culture

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

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

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

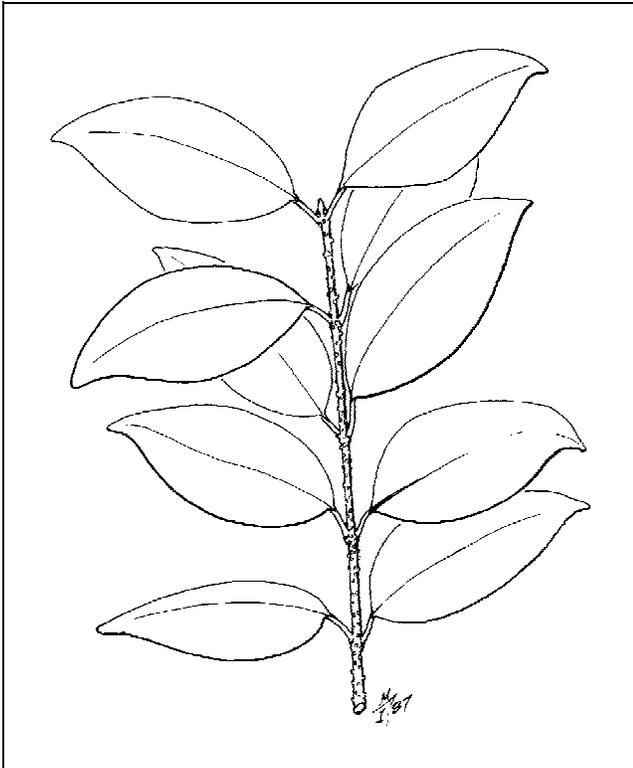


Figure 3. Foliage of 'Variegatum' Japanese Privet.

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

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

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

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

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Although tolerant of tight clipping, Japanese Privet is quite attractive when allowed to retain its natural multi-stemmed form, making it ideal for use in shrubbery borders and other informal settings. It makes a nice specimen in any landscape where a small dark tree is needed. Planted close together on about 10 to 15-foot centers, ligustrum will form a canopy over a pedestrian walkway but will not grow tall or wide enough for canopy closure over a street or parking lot. The tree looks best in a landscape setting with a low groundcover planted around its base.

Japanese Privet grows in full sun or partial shade and is tolerant of a wide range of soil types, including calcareous clay as long as water is not allowed to stand in the root zone. Plants grow quickly while young but slow with age. Although it can withstand drought,

Japanese Privet is not especially salt-tolerant and will require protection from direct salt spray. If you decide to use this plant as a clipped hedge, be sure that the top is kept narrower than the bottom to provide light to the lower branches. This will help ensure the plant will remain full to the ground.

Many other cultivars are available and plants grafted onto *L. quihoui* for protection against nematodes are preferred, when available. 'Silver Star' has deep green leaves mottled with grey and edged in creamy white; 'Texanum' is very similar to the species but is lower-growing and has denser growth; 'Fraseri' has yellow to yellow-green new growth; 'Jack Frost' has glossy green leaves with a thin edge of creamy white; 'Lake Tresca' has small leaves and the lower branches droop to form a mound; 'Lusterleaf' has large, thick leaves; 'Suwanee River' has compact erect branches. *Ligustrum x vicaryi* has golden variegated leaves, with bright yellow new growth.

Propagation is by cuttings or grafting.

Pests and Diseases

None usually serious, although thrips and mites can occasionally discolor foliage. Soil nematodes can cause serious plant decline and they can be prevalent, particularly in sandy soil.