

Ficus lyrata: Fiddleleaf Fig¹

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Introduction

A 25 to 50-foot-tall, evergreen tree of upright-spreading, irregular growth, fiddleleaf fig produces 8 to 15-inch-long and 10-inch-wide, dull green, thick, fiddle-shaped leaves which are quite attractive. The trunk can grow to several feet thick. Most trees in the landscape are 15 to 25 feet tall. Larger ones sometimes break apart in strong winds due to tight branch crotches and embedded bark. Corrective pruning early in the life of the tree can help prevent this from occurring. Plant them in a place protected from the wind, such as a courtyard to increase longevity in the landscape.

General Information

Scientific name: *Ficus lyrata*

Pronunciation: FYE-kuss lye-RAY-tuh

Common name(s): Fiddleleaf fig

Family: *Moraceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Figure 2)

Origin: native to tropical western and central Africa

UF/IFAS Invasive Assessment Status: not considered a problem species at this time, may be recommended (North, Central, South)

Uses: indoors; deck or patio; specimen; container or planter; espalier; highway median; street without sidewalk; shade



Figure 1. Full Form—*Ficus lyrata*: Fiddleleaf fig

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Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 25 to 50 feet

Spread: 25 to 35 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular

Crown shape: vase, round, spreading

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: undulate, entire

Leaf shape: obovate

Leaf venation: pinnate, brachidodrome

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen, broadleaf evergreen

Leaf blade length: 8 to 15 inches

Leaf color: dull green on top, paler green underneath

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy



Figure 3. Leaf—*Ficus lyrata*: Fiddleleaf fig

Flower

Flower color: unknown

Flower characteristics: not showy; emerges in clusters inside of the syconium produced by this tree

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: ½ inch

Fruit covering: fleshy fig with creamy white dots

Fruit color: turns from green to red when ripe

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves a litter problem



Figure 4. Fruit—*Ficus lyrata*: Fiddleleaf fig

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically one trunk; no thorns; broken stems excrete a milky sap

Bark: brown, flaky, becoming gray and smooth with age

Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown

Current year twig thickness: thick

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun to partial shade

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; occasionally wet but well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: no

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown

Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

Use and Management

Fiddleleaf fig can be used in containers when young or can be planted to make a striking specimen tree. They create quite an accent by a patio or in shrub bed because of the coarse leaf texture. Due to their large size, the leaves can be a nuisance to some people when they fall but there are never too many of them.

Fiddleleaf fig will grow moderately fast in full sun or partial shade on any well-drained soil and should receive regular watering. Be sure to cut roots circling the container before planting since these can cause the tree to become unstable as it grows older. There are some aerial roots produced from the branches but not as many as on some other *Ficus* species, such as *Ficus benjamina*.

Propagation is by layering and cuttings.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern but occasionally scales are a problem.

Reference

Koeser, A.K., Friedman, M.H., Hasing, G., Finley, H., Schelb, J. 2017. Trees: South Florida and the Keys. Gainesville: University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.



Figure 5. Bark—*Ficus lyrata*: Fiddleleaf fig
Credits: Gitta Hasing