

***Ficus benjamina* (Weeping fig)**

Classification

Kingdom: Plantae

Clade: Tracheophytes

Clade: Angiosperms

Clade: Eudicots

Clade: Rosids

Order: Rosales

Family: Moraceae

Genus: *Ficus*

Species: *benjamina*



PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Height: *Ficus benjamina* is a tree reaching 30 m (98 feet) tall in natural conditions.

Trunk: The bark is light grey and smooth. The bark of young branches is brownish. The widely spread, highly branching tree top often covers a diameter of 10 metres. It is a relatively small-leaved fig.

Leaf: The young foliage is light green and slightly wavy, the older leaves are green and smooth.

Fruit: The figs of this species are small (about 3cm in diameter), globular, red or reddish orange in colour.

DISTRIBUTION AND HABITAT

The species is also naturalised in the West Indies and in the states of Florida and Arizona in the United States. Its small fruit are favoured by some birds.

CULTIVATION AND USES

It requires a moderate amount of watering in summer and only enough to keep it from drying out in the winter. The plant is well known due to its medicinal potential. Its latex and some fruit extracts are used by indigenous communities to treat skin disorders, inflammation, piles, vomiting, leprosy, malaria, nose-diseases and cancer besides the use as a general tonic. The plant is also used as an antimicrobial, antinociceptive, antipyretic, hypotensive and anti-dysentery remedy.

INTERESTING FACTS

The leaves, bark and fruits of *F. benjamina* contain various bioactive constituents like cinnamic acid, lactose, naringenin, quercetin, caffeic acid and stigmasterol. The seeds in the fruit represent unity and universal understanding and knowledge.