PLANT FACT SHEET

Ficus elastica Roxb. ex Hornem.

GENUS *Ficus* **FAMILY** Moraceae

COMMON NAMES India Rubber Tree, Rubber plant

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Fruit, Vegetable

The very young leaves are eaten before they expand.

DESCRIPTION

A fig. It is an evergreen tree. It grows to 30-60 m high and spreads to 10-60 m across. The trunk can be 25-40 cm across. The stem is erect and stout. It can have buttresses. The bark is pale grey and smooth. It can grow on other plants when young. The tree has a rounded crown. It produces aerial roots which hang down and later become prop roots. It also has an aggressive root system. The leafy growth at the base of a leaf is red and 10 cm long. It leaves an easy to see scar. The leaves are green and glossy. Often new leaves have a red flush. They are oblong and 30-45 cm long. They are leathery and have prominent veins. On fruiting branches of mature trees the leaves are smaller. The fruit are greenish-yellow figs. These are 1 cm long and grow from the axils where leaves fall. Often they occur in pairs.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It does best in rich, moist soil. It suits a protected sunny position. It is damaged by drought and frost. It is salt tolerant. They need a temperature above 15°C. It grows up to 1,200 m altitude in NE India. In China it grows in Yunnan. It suits hardiness zones 11-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from cuttings of young shoots. They can also be grown by aerial layering. Plants can also be grown from seed.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It is fast growing.

NOTES

Latex can be extracted for making rubber. There are about 800-1000 Ficus species. They are mostly in the tropics. There are 120 Ficus species in tropical America.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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