

# Ficus virens

(White Fig)



Above: Maturing tree in Botanic Park, Adelaide.



## Notes

A medium to large tree that can reach heights of 20m often with a broad canopy, wider than tall, with a trunk diameter exceeding 1.8m; often a strangler fig. Dense foliage is deciduous.

The variety *sublanceolata* grows alongside the related white fig in the northern part of its range.

Although tolerant of a range of soil types and extended dry periods, it prefers moist, humus rich soils with good drainage to develop best specimens.

Good tree for large urban parks where its spreading form can provide good shade.

**Above:** Trunk and bark from var. *sublanceolata*.

### Origin

Occurs in WA, NT, and northern Australia and southwards as far as coastal central Queensland. Also occurs in Asia, southeast Asia and the SW Pacific islands. A common and widespread species. Altitudinal range from sea level to 1150m. *Ficus virens* var. *sublanceolata* grows alongside the related white fig in the northern part of its range.

### Habit

White Fig is a large tree capable of reaching heights in excess of 20m and up to 30m tall often with a broad canopy, wider than tall, with a trunk diameter exceeding 1.8m, often a strangler.

### Description

Produces large spreading branches with numerous aerial roots.

Heavily buttressed at the base. The bark is smooth and grey with various bumps and lenticels on the trunk. Small branches smooth, but with scars of leaf stipules. Leaves oblong- elliptic to ovate or lanceolate, mostly 5–20cm long, 2.5–6cm wide, apex acuminate. The variety *sublanceolata* differs with narrower leaves, almost lanceolate in shape.

*Ficus virens* is one of the rare deciduous trees in the tropical lowland rainforest, although new foliage is produced within a week or two of the leaves falling. New foliage is attractive, having pink tones along the leaf edges and extending into the whole of the leaf, giving it a bronze-green tinge. Mature foliage is slightly leathery, and in time lightens to a delicate lime green. Figs approximately 10mm diameter, pinkish brown to white; mostly borne amongst leaves, generally sessile and usually paired. Generally slow to moderate growth rate.

<b>Tolerances</b>	Naturally grows in well developed rain forest, drier, more seasonal rain forest, beach forest and monsoon forest. Although tolerant of a range of soil types and extended dry periods, it prefers moist, humus rich soils with good drainage to develop best specimens. Prefers full sun but will grow in partial shade.
<b>Root space</b>	Based on a 100+cm trunk diameter (DBH) the tree would require more than 50m <sup>3</sup> root volume (Urban, 2008).
<b>Availability</b>	Rare. More available from nurseries in northern Australia.
<b>Uses &amp; management</b>	Not a commonly cultivated tree in Australia. Suitable only for large parks and gardens where they make distinctive specimens. Low maintenance. Any pruning that is needed should be carried out in late winter to early spring. No major pests or diseases. Advanced stock may be difficult to transplant.



**Above:** Detail of foliage.

**Reference**

Australian Tropical Rainforest Plants as seen 7 April 2015: [http://keys.trin.org.au/key-server/data/0e0f0504-0103-430d-8004-060d07080d04/media/Html/taxon/Ficus\\_virens\\_var\\_virens.htm](http://keys.trin.org.au/key-server/data/0e0f0504-0103-430d-8004-060d07080d04/media/Html/taxon/Ficus_virens_var_virens.htm)

Some Magnetic Island plants as seen 7 April 2015: <http://www.somemagneticislandplants.com.au/index.php/plants/642-ficus-virens>

Urban, J. (2008) *Up by roots*. International Society of Arboriculture.

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