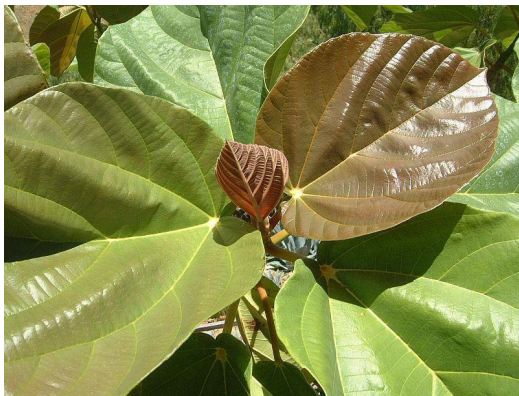


## Jewels, February 2008

This month's plants are the members of the genus *Ficus*, the fig trees. Probably the best known in Florida is the Cuban laurel, which is neither Cuban nor a laurel, but a fig tree from India. Its sister species is the weeping Chinese banyan, *Ficus benjamina*. The fiddle leaf fig, *Ficus lyrata* and the rubber tree, *Ficus elastica*, are common landscape plants. There are also 2 species of strangler fig native to Florida, and we see those growing out of the cut, dead fronds of palm trees. As always, though, the species I want to discuss are those that are less often seen in Florida, but still likely to perform very well in your garden.

The clown fig, *Ficus aspera*, has leaves that are variegated green and white, with decorative figs striped reddish-pink to offer a wonderful contrast. It is slow growing (a rarity in Florida!), but will eventually reach 15 feet in height. It prefers full sun and regular water.



The Roxburgh fig, *Ficus auriculata* (or *roxburghii*), is the species with the second largest leaves. Not only is it impressive when the leaves reach full size, but the clusters of large, decorative figs growing directly out of the trunk make it a fascinating oddity. It also prefers full sun, but lots of water. I only know of one



nursery in the US that carries it, but someday you may be able to get one from me!