

# RUSTY FIG

**Alternative name:** Small-leaved Fig, Port Jackson Fig

**FAMILY:** MORACEAE

**SCIENTIFIC NAME:** *Ficus rubiginosa*



**Form and size:**

Hardy small to large tree with a spreading canopy to 6-30m  
Can be a strangler  
Buttresses are sometimes present  
Slow growing

**Leaves:**

Green simple, alternate ovate, elliptic or obovate, 4-19cm x 1-13cm  
**Adult leaf -**  
**Topside:** green  
**Underside:** rusty hair  
New growth has rusty hairs

**Bark:**

Brown to yellowish brown with lenticels (raised pores), often with scattered scales  
Extrudes milky sap if cut

**Flowers:**

The trees produce three types of flower:

- male,
- a long-styled female, and
- a short-styled female flower, often called the gall flower.


All three types of flower are contained within the structure we usually think of as the fruit.

**Flowering Period:**

All year

**Fruit:**

Globular figs, mostly in pairs 0.5-1cm long  
Warty or dotted

	<p>Yellow or orange turning red or purplish when ripe All year</p>
<p><b>Ecological notes:</b></p>	<p>Fruit eaten by the Banded, Rose-crowned and Wompoo Fruit Doves, Purple Swamphen, Brown Cuckoo-dove, Emerald Dove, Pied-imperial, Topknot, White-headed and Wonga Pigeons, Galahs, Major Mitchell's Cockatoo, Double-eyed Fig-Parrot, Rainbow and Scaly-breasted Lorikeets, Channel-billed Cuckoo, Common Koel, Red Wattlebird, Blue-faced, Brown, Grey-headed, Lewin's, Singing, Spiny-cheeked and White-fronted Honeyeaters, Noisy and Yellow-throated Miners, Figbird, Pied Currawong, Green Catbird and the Regent, Satin and Spotted Bowerbirds. Larval food plant of the Common Crow and Purple Moonbeam Butterflies and the Native Fig Moth. Timber readily attracts borers.</p>
<p><b>Cultivation:</b></p>	<p>Grow from fresh seed or cutting or aerial layers.</p>
<p><b>Distribution:</b></p>	<p>Queensland and New South Wales Littoral and dry rainforest, open forests or woodlands Can be found on dry, rocky hills and in gullies. Will tolerate the cold and grow on a range of soil types along the coast.</p>  <p>The map shows the continent of Australia with red dots representing the distribution of the plant. The dots are concentrated along the eastern coast, from the northern part of Queensland down to the southern part of New South Wales. There are also a few isolated dots in the southwest of Western Australia and one in the south of Victoria. The map includes labels for 'EAST TIMOR' and 'AUSTRALIA'.</p>
<p><b>OTHER INFORMATION</b> <b>Disclaimer:</b> Rotary Club of Capricorn Coast can not take any responsibility for any adverse effects from the use of plants. Always seek advice from a professional before ingesting any part of a plant or using a plant medicinally.</p>	

The plant can begin as an epiphyte (a plant that grows on another plant) or grow out of rocks.

Fig trees have a unique form of fertilisation, each species relying on a single, highly specialised species of wasp that is itself totally dependent upon that fig species in order to breed.

1. The female fig wasp enters a fig and lays its eggs on the short styled female flowers while pollinating the long styled female flowers.
2. Wingless male fig wasps emerge first, inseminate the emerging females and then bore exit tunnels out of the fig for the winged females.
3. Females emerge, collect pollen from the male flowers and fly off in search of figs whose female flowers are receptive.

The fig must flower all year so there is an overlap of emission and reception of fig wasps.

### **QUIZ TIME**

- 1. How many types of flowers are within one fig?**
  - a. 1
  - b. 2
  - c. 3
  - d. 4
  
- 2. What insect is responsible for pollinating fig flowers?**
  - a. bee
  - b. wasp
  - c. hornet
  - d. butterfly
  
- 3. What are lenticels?**
  - a. raised pores
  - b. stamens
  - c. petals
  - d. raised petals

### **ANSWERS:**

1. C
2. B
3. A

### **REFERENCES**

CSIRO. (2020). *Australian Tropical Rainforest Plants*

Melzer, R., & Plumb, J. (2011). *Plants of Capricornia*. Belgamba.

Williams, P., Kirkpatrick, S., Griffith University. Centre for Coastal Management, & Gold Coast (Qld.). Council. (2009). *Coastal Plant Pocket Guide*. Griffith Centre for Coastal Management.

**Image 1**

McPherson, J. (2018). *Ficus rubiginosa*.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ficus\\_rubiginosa\\_syconia\\_7th\\_Brigade\\_Park\\_Chermside\\_L1100395.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ficus_rubiginosa_syconia_7th_Brigade_Park_Chermside_L1100395.jpg)

**Image 2**

McPherson, J. (2015). *Ficus rubiginosa*.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ficus\\_rubiginosa\\_on\\_Melaleuca\\_quinquenervia\\_7th\\_Brigade\\_Park\\_Chermside\\_L1040592.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ficus_rubiginosa_on_Melaleuca_quinquenervia_7th_Brigade_Park_Chermside_L1040592.jpg)

**Image 3**

The Australasian Virtual Herbarium. (2021). *Ficus rubiginosa*.

[https://avh.ala.org.au/occurrences/search?taxa=Ficus+rubiginosa#tab\\_mapView](https://avh.ala.org.au/occurrences/search?taxa=Ficus+rubiginosa#tab_mapView)

1. C

2.

3. A

4. D