

# WHITE FIG

**Alternative name:** Banyan, Mountain Fig, Sour Fig, Figwood

**FAMILY:** MORACEAE

**SCIENTIFIC NAME:** *Ficus virens*



**Form and size:**

Epiphytic when young. It is a plant that grows upon another plant or object merely for physical support. Young White Fig epiphytes have no attachment to the ground or other obvious nutrient source. They are not parasitic on the supporting plants.  
Medium to large tree with buttress or prop roots.

**Leaves:**

Simple, alternate, entire, ovate to elliptic.  
**Adult leaf -**  
**Topside:** bright green  
**Underside:** duller green

**Bark:**

Grey to brown  
Smooth

**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 and generally pollinated by specific wasps.

**Male flowers:** few, sessile (have no stalk), 4 or 5 calyx lobes,  
**Gall flowers:** pedicellate (has stalk); 3 or 4 calyx lobes; style shorter than ovary.  
**Female flowers:** similar to gall flowers; style longer than ovary.

**Flowering Period:**

April to August

**Fruit:**

**Figs** are globular and usually found in auxiliary pairs. They are either sessile (no stalk) or on short peduncles (stalks) up to 6mm long.  
Fruit is pinkish-brown or white with reddish spots, ripening to purple or black.

September to July



**Ecological notes**

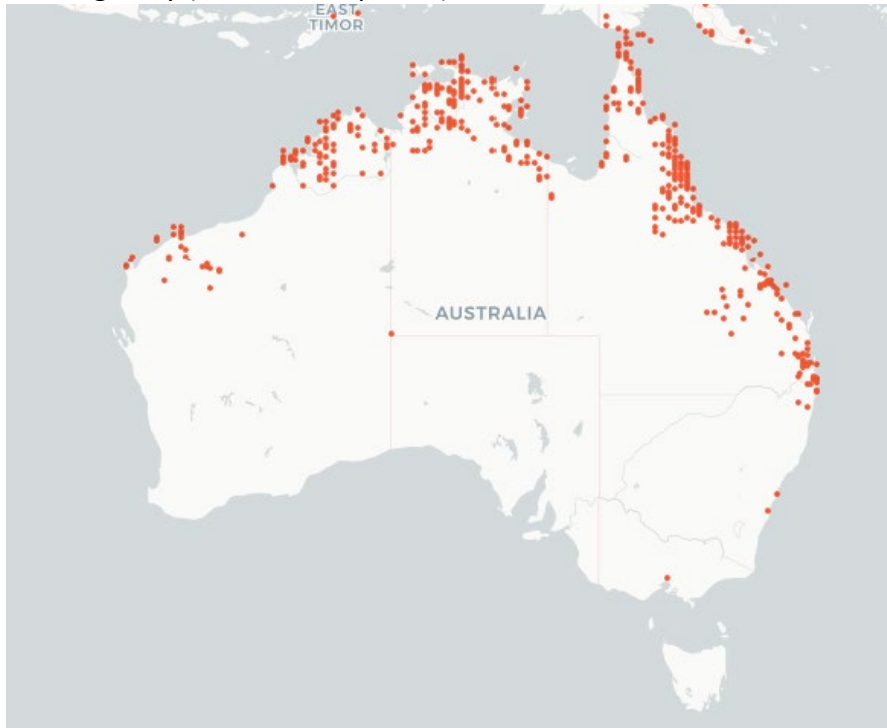
Fruit eaten by the Speckled Flying-fox, Southern Cassowary, Emerald Dove, Pied Currawong, Metallic Starling, Double-eyed Fruit Parrot, Eastern Rosella, Lewin's Honeyeater, Black-faced and Barred Cuckoo-shrikes, Rainbow and Scaly-Breasted Lorikeets, fruit doves such as Banded, Wompoo and Rose-crowned and pigeons such as Imperial and Topknot, as well as varied triller, figbird, Olive-backed and Yellow Orioles.  
It is the larval food plant of the Common Crow Butterfly.

**Cultivation:**

Grow from fresh seed, cuttings or aerial laying.

**Distribution:**

Found across northern Australia, Cape York to Richmond River in New South Wales, northern Western Australia and Northern Territory. Located in beach scrub, gallery (riverine or riparian) forest, littoral rainforest and rainforest.



**OTHER INFORMATION**

**Disclaimer:** 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.

Tree lifespans can be extremely long, possibly up to 500 years.

**Bark:** from the aerial roots were used to make string bags, fishing lines and armbands. Chewed bark was used for tourniquets and slings. Bark concoctions were used as a wash on skin ulcers.

**Latex:** used for caulking boats and waterproofing.

**Timber:** including the aerial roots, used in light construction and tool making.

## **QUIZ TIME**

### **1. What does sessile mean?**

- a. has stalks
- b. stationary
- c. no stalks

### **2. How many types of flowers does the White Fig have?**

- a. 5
- b. 4
- c. 3
- d. 2

### **3. Can young White Fig trees be considered air plants with no attachment to the ground or other obvious nutrient source?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

## **ANSWERS:**

- 1. C
- 2. C
- 3. A

## **REFERENCES**

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

Oriolus84. (2013). *Ficus virens*.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/29289211@N05/10452934403>

### **Image 2**

Poyt. (2020). *Ficus virens* tree.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/17674930@N07/49519933502>

### **Image 3**

Xylopa. (2014). *Ficus virens* fruit.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/xylopa/15375354233/in/photostream/>

### **Image 4**

The Australasian Virtual Herbarium. (2022). *Ficus virens*.

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