

## The benjamin tree or fig

### **Ficus benjamina "too little".**

**Family:** Moraceae.

**Origin:** Tropical regions of India.

A tree or shrub that is mainly used as a shade and ornamental tree for homes and gardens. The leaves of the "normal" fig are leathery and about five inches long and two inches wide, while the ficus benjamina "too little" leaves are more or less half as long and wide, there as perfect for bonsai use. It is said that they are perfect for indoor bonsai, i have them outside from spring to autumn and then place the inside during the winter period.

Ficus trees are perfect for neary every style, often seen as group formations.

**Repotting / Soil:** As the growth of the tree and in consequence of the roots is very vigorous i repot the tree every two years eliminating the third part of the roots. For my ficus trees I prefer glazed pots in green and blue tones. The soil mixture I use is composed of 1/3 humus or leaf mold, 1/3 of sand and 1/3 of loam.

**Light:** The Ficus is a very versatile plant as far as light goes. In the full sun (should not do that in Spain, Sun is to hot and dry) it will have a dense amount of leaves. But, in shadier zones it will grow very open with fewer leaves and thin weeping branches so you will able to play with this condition to form a proper tree form. Don't change light conditions too often because figs tend to drop their leafs as they are accustomed to prepare themselves for rain and dry seasons.

**Pruning and cleaning:** They can be pruned from spring to autumn . I prefer not too prune them to much at one time as they loose a lot of sap (you can avoid it by applying charcoal powder to the wound). Be sure to remove young breeds where you don't want them to grow.

**Wiring:** Wire from spring to summer. Be careful when you try to bend big branches as they bend but also break quite easily. Be sure to protect the branches with raffia before you wire and bend them.

**Watering:** Figs need constant and regular watering as they don't like whether dry nor too moisten soil conditions. This is necessary because changing water conditions will make them shed their leafs.

**Fertilizer:** As ever, I tend to use organic solid fertilizer which i apply during the growing season, that is from soon spring to october.

**Temperature and exposure:** They resist very high temperatures if the air is not too dry, as happens in Madrid. Here i have them in mid shadow and moisten their leafs very often.

**Diseases:** The only plague i have had on one of my ficus trees were louses which I removed with an intense shower of water and two appliances of very dissolved Folithion.