

Ficus microcarpa

Chinese banyan, Malayan banyan

Ficus microcarpa L. fil.

Family: *Moraceae*

Description: Large branching tree with hanging adventitious roots that can root and form columnar stems that can eventually merge with the trunk. Banyans are epiphytic and can germinate in the crotches of other trees, send roots to the ground, and eventually strangle the host. Leaf size variable, dark green, often showing mite damage, 3 inches long by 2 inches wide, margins entire. Fruit white to pink to purple, 0.4 inches diameter, in clusters. Milky sap in stems, leaves, and fruits. Seeds small, many, spread by birds. Roots shallow, wide spreading. *Ficus* is the Latin name for the fig, another member of the *Moraceae*; *microcarpa*, small fruited^(5, 70).

Distribution: Native to South Asia and the Pacific Rim. Spreading since 1938 when pollinating wasp *Euprestina verticillata* was introduced⁽⁷⁰⁾. Naturalized on all the main islands.

Environmental impact: Besides shading with its broad canopy, it is a threat to host plants. Banyan roots are very destructive to infrastructures: pavement, home foundations, irrigation ditches.



Management: The most effective way to kill large Chinese banyans is by placing 0.10–0.17 fl oz (3–5 ml) of herbicide into holes drilled into the trunk each foot around trunk. Because of the compartmentalization of the trunks from the rooted and merged adventitious roots, the trunks must be drilled at each segment to ensure effective control. This can best be done by making follow-up treatments after symptoms from earlier treatments reveal unaffected stem segments. Banyans strangling a host tree can be treated in this way with glyphosate without killing the host. Triclopyr and dicamba were also effective in killing banyan by applications to drilled holes.