

at chemical control of mahogany webworms are often unwarranted.

Although in the long run the best solution to the mahogany webworm problem in Florida may be for residents to accept them as a natural phenomenon, there are situations where some form of control is needed. Treatment of mahoganies with chlorpyrifos, labeled by the manufacturer for use against mahogany webworms, or similar products registered for use against this insect, might be appropriate in nurseries where infestations of mahogany webworm might affect sales. This treatment resulted in a rapid kill of the webworms.

In contrast to nursery situations, there is generally a higher tolerance for insect damage on trees in the landscape, and a greater possibility of adverse effects of pesticides on non-target organisms including man. In these situations, products such as azadirachtin and *B. t.* may be appropriate. They are relatively slow-acting on mahogany webworm, but within days bring about excellent control.

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EVALUATION OF SELECTED ORNAMENTAL FIGS FOR INTERIOR USE

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Abstract. Twenty-four commercially grown species or cultivars of *Ficus* with medium or fine textured leaves were assembled in a shadehouse at the Central Florida Research and Education Center in Apopka for evaluation of pictorial characteristics (form, branching habit, bark color, foliage texture and foliage color) and production considerations (rooting ease, growth rate, staking and pruning requirements and tendency to fruit). Findings of this evaluation indicate that several of the new cultivars are superior to some of the major cultivars now produced by Florida nurserymen. Those plants which merit more attention from the foliage plant industry are: *F. benjamina* cultivars—'Florida Spire', 'Jacqueline', 'Hartman's #1', 'Nuda', 'Spearmint'™ and 'Wintergreen'®, *F. maclellandii* 'Alli', and *F. nitida* 'Green Gem'.

Figs are woody trees, shrubs or vines belonging to the genus *Ficus*, which is a member of the mulberry family (*Moraceae*). Plant taxonomists have described over 800 species of *Ficus* of tropical origin, primarily from the Old World (1). Only a small fraction of the known species are used as interior plants. The 1988-1989 issue of Florida Foliage Locator listed 9 species and 19 cultivars which are produced commercially for use as indoor foliage plants (2).

The intent of this paper is to describe several of the tree or shrub forms of *Ficus* which are grown commercially. Emphasis is given to those characteristics which are important to nurserymen growing the plants or those in-

They should be applied early in the "webworm season" when most of the larvae are in early instars (1). When used as a foliar spray on West Indies mahoganies they are likely to be highly specific to mahogany webworms, because this is one of only a few species of insects which feeds on the leaves of this tree in Florida. Neither product used at label rates is known to be toxic to insects or higher animals upon contact.

Literature Cited

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cluded with selection of plants to meet specific interior planting design criteria. Only species and cultivars with fine and intermediate textured foliage were included in this paper.

Methods

Data presented in this paper were taken from a collection of 24 different species and cultivars of *Ficus* assembled at the Central Florida Research and Education Center at Apopka, from 1986 through 1989. Since new plants were added to the collection through 1988, direct comparisons of young plant and older plant height and width were not made. Plants were container-grown in a shadehouse (47 percent shade) which was lined with clear polyethylene and provided with forced-air heat to maintain a minimum of 45°F during the winter season. Plants were potted in a medium composed of 3 Florida peat: 1 coarse sand (v:v). Fertilizer was applied at the rate of 41 lb N/1000 ft²/year using 19-6-12 Osmocote®.

Results and Discussion

Plant form, branching habit, bark color, foliage texture and foliage color listed in Table 1 are characteristics which should be available to those specifying plants for interiors. Table 2 presents 5 different production considerations for each of the 24 *Ficus* in the evaluation.

Ficus benjamina, the weeping fig, is presently the most popular interior tree in the United States. Introduced to Florida in 1959, the plant was strongly promoted during the early 1960's, and has steadily gained popularity. The bright green glossy leaf of the species has a wavy margin, distinctively different from cultivars *F. benjamina* 'Exotica', 'Philippinensis' and several other similar selections of *F. benjamina* that have leaves with a dull luster and a nearly flat margin.

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