

FICUS THONNINGII



Kingdom: Plantae
Phylum: Tracheophyta (vascular plants)
Class: Magnoliopsida (flowering plants)
Order: Rosales
Family: Moraceae (mulberry family)
Genus: Ficus (fig)
Species: Ficus thonningii Bl.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Habit: Large evergreen tree, reaching up to 21 meters (70 ft) tall with a rounded to spreading and dense crown.

Leaves: Alternate, simple, leathery, lanceolate or elliptic in shape. 5-10 centimeters (2-4 inches) long, smooth, and glossy.

Bark: Young branches hairy, older branches and stems smooth and grey.

Roots: Aerial roots that hang down from branches and can root in the ground, strangling the host tree (hence the common name strangler fig).

Flowers: Small, greenish-yellow, inconspicuous.

Fruit: Small (cherry-sized) fig, green when unripe, turning yellow or orange when mature.

USES:

Landscaping: Popular for landscaping in Africa due to its large size and dense shade.

Traditional Medicine: Bark and roots used in traditional medicine, although there is no scientific evidence to support their claimed medicinal properties.

Wildlife Food: Fruits are eaten by birds and other animals.

Ecological Importance: Plays a role in seed dispersal through animals eating the fruits.

Additional Notes:

Recent phylogenetic analysis suggests *Ficus thonningii* may be a species complex, meaning it could potentially encompass several closely related but distinct species.

The tree can be invasive in some areas, particularly where it threatens native plant communities.