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How to Grow Figs: The Complete Guide



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FREE GUIDE!



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Planting, Growing, and Harvesting Figs

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)
Last Updated: June 7, 2024




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Flavorful figs are the unsung superheroes of fruits! It may surprise you to learn that fig trees can be grown in both warm and temperate regions. There are even patio sized

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About Figs

Figs thrive in areas with long and hot summers (Zones 8 and warmer), though they can also be grown in colder zones if properly insulated from freezing temperatures or grown in containers and brought indoors.

The common fig tree (*Ficus carica*) is the most popular fig species for home gardeners because its flowers do not require pollination to yield figs. Many varieties of the common fig tree exist, including hardy cultivars that can be grown outdoors in slightly cooler climates (Zones 6 and 7).

A fig can be eaten fresh from the tree, dried, or [used in cooking](#). A single fig is only 50 calories and provides higher mineral and fiber content than most fruits, nuts, or vegetables.

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Figs soak up cholesterol, promote healthy bowel movements, reduce heart disease, regulate kidney and liver functions, lower blood pressure, and even inhibit some cancers. Plus, figs are packed with calcium, which reduces the risk of developing osteoporosis. They also contain phosphorus, which helps bones regrow.

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PLANTING

Figs can be planted outdoors without much trouble in USDA Zone 8 and warmer. In zones where winter temperatures get colder than 10°F (-12 °C) for periods of time, be sure to choose a hardy fig variety. [See where to buy hardy figs.](#)

When to Plant Fig Trees

Plant fig trees outdoors in the early spring or late fall when the tree is dormant.

Alternatively, figs can be grown in large containers and brought inside for the winter.

How to Plant Fig Trees

- For **container fig trees**, grow them in a soil-based potting mix and add fine bark chips to improve drainage. Keep the tree in full sun in the summer. In the spring and summer, be sure to add a high-nitrogen fertilizer every four weeks and water the tree moderately. In the winter, move the tree indoors and keep the soil moist.
- For **outdoor fig trees**, plant the tree in the spring or early fall in full sun. Fig trees can grow in most types of soil as long as the soil is well-drained and contains plenty of organic material. (Learn more about [organic soil amendments](#).)
- Space fig trees at least 20 feet away from any buildings or other trees.
- If given the chance, fig trees put down deep roots, so bear that in mind when choosing a planting spot.
- To plant container-grown trees in the

1. Remove the plant from its pot and re-move any circling roots by laying the root ball on its side and using shears to cut through the roots.
2. Dig a hole that is a few inches deeper and wider than the spread of the roots. Set the tree on top of a small mound of soil in the middle of the hole. Be sure to spread the roots away from the trunk without excessively bending them.
3. Plant the tree 2 to 4 inches deeper than it was originally in the pot (check the color of the trunk to see the original soil line).



GROWING

Caring for Fig Trees

- Water young fig trees regularly to help

dry climates, water fig trees deeply at least once a week.

- Unless grown in containers, most fig trees do not require regular fertilization. However, if your fig tree is not growing much (less than 12 inches in one growing season), you can add 1/2 to 1 pound of nitrogen supplement. Divide up the nitrogen into 3 to 4 feedings. Start applying the nitrogen in late winter and end in midsummer.
- You can also apply a layer of mulch around the tree to help prevent weeds and keep moisture in the roots.
- Fig trees require little pruning. During the dormant season, be sure to remove all dead, diseased, or weak branches to encourage growth.
- If you have an abundant growth of figs, you can thin the fruit to encourage larger figs.
- In colder regions, bring container-grown fig trees indoors for the winter. Keep the soil moist.
- If your area experiences a particularly cold winter, fig trees planted outdoors may die back to the ground. If the tree is of a hardy variety, the below-ground part of the tree will likely be unaffected. Remove all dead

Types

- **‘Brown Turkey,’** which produces abundant medium to large figs. This type works best in warm climates, but is fairly tolerant of cooler temperatures, too.
- **‘Celeste’** produces small, sweet, purplish figs. It is one of the more winter-hardy varieties.
- **‘Hardy Chicago’** is a winter-hardy variety that produces purple, medium-size figs.
- **‘King’** is well adapted for the cooler conditions found in the northwest. It produces medium figs that are sweet and rich in flavor.
- **‘Kadota’** vigorously produces small to medium fruit. Its figs are rich and sweet, and it is the most commonly canned fig.

HARVESTING

Harvesting Figs

- You should harvest figs only when they are fully ripe, as they will not continue to ripen off the tree. The figs should be fully colored and slightly soft to the touch.
- You may need to invest in bird netting to protect your crop: figs are a favorite of

- When picking figs, wear gloves or long sleeves because the sap from the fig tree can irritate your skin.
- Figs are very perishable. Store figs in the refrigerator; they will keep for 2 to 3 days.
- For long-term storage, you can freeze figs whole for later use. Another storage method is to dry the figs. You can also can your own figs.



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PESTS/DISEASES

- Root-knot nematodes
- Leaf spots
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WIT AND WISDOM

- Figs are an excellent source of potassium, dietary fiber, and calcium.
- “You can’t grow figs from thistles.”

RECIPES

**FIGS STUFFED WITH GORGONZOLA
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OPEN-FACE PEAR-FIG PIE

FRUIT

Catherine Boeckmann



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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COMMENTS

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Anson Lennon (not verified) 8 months 3 weeks ago

My father-in-law has a fig tree, as he said last year. The fruit stayed green and never ripened. Even after it fell off the tree, it still did not ripen. Has anyone had this problem and can help advise?

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REPLY

The Editors 8 months 3 weeks ago

There are some different reasons that figs may not ripen: 1. Figs need up to 2 months to ripen. If stems were killed by cold weather, the figs produced on new shoots in the spring may not have time to ripen. 2) If the fig tree is new and not established, perhaps it's not the right fig for his growing zone. 3) If there has been extreme drought or heat, not enough sun (less than 8 hours of full sun), or excessive fertilizer, that could create too much stress for the plant and slow down its ability to produce in time.

REPLY

Julie Leighton (not verified) 9 months ago

I have what looks like a fig tree that's appeared in a large tub in my garden, atm its just one long shoot about a mtr tall should I cut the top out to make it shoot out the sides to get more shrubby?

REPLY

randy scianna (not verified) 12 months ago

I just joined another Fig forum and I noticed they have the same issue in common as this one. No Reply's.

I'll attempt to ask two questions with the hope of answers. 1) In south Florida we have nematodes. Is there something I can do to solve this issue? 2) One of our planted fig trees has several spouts growing up from the root system. Should I select the best and cut back the 4 or 5 others?

REPLY

The Editors 11 months 4 weeks ago

Hi, Randy. If your fig tree has root knot nematodes, your best option is to fertilize often. Once an infestation sets in, it is extremely difficult to get rid of it.

You can replant the suckers to grow new fig trees. If you leave them attached, they will divert growing energy from the parent fig.

REPLY

I was given two fig trees by a relative. They've grown great here in the Piedmont, NC. I'm not sure of the variety of fig, but we get an abundance of them, but they've never turned purple. I've seen them when they're supposedly ripe (kind of limply hanging on the tree), but never purple, never sweet. I'm at a loss for what's going on.

REPLY

Miguel monge (not verified) 4 months ago

What's going on ? I'm going through the same.in AZ

REPLY

Jennifer F (not verified) 1 year 9 months ago

My greet produces well but the figs are dry and woody and very little flavor. Seems to ripen but maintains pulpy texture and no flavor. What should I do?

REPLY

cause they will not continue to ripen once picked.

With that being said, there could be other issues that led to your figs lacking that delicious flavor. Prolonged periods of heat or drought can affect the taste as can too much water. If it is an issue with lack of water, using straw or mulch to help with moisture retention would help. Fig trees also need 8 hours of sunlight a day and less than that can hinder the production of natural sugars. Figs don't always require fertilization, but the addition of phosphorus and potassium help with fruit growth. Too much nitrogen may cause your tree to focus on growth instead of fruiting. Fertilizer should be added when the tree is dormant during the late fall, winter, and again in early spring.

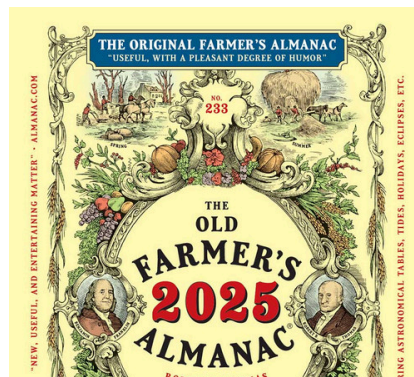
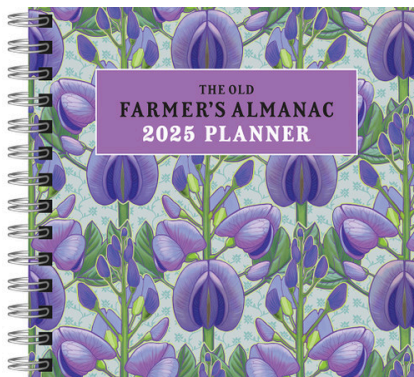
It could also be a sign of disease, as fungi and bacteria brought about by insects can also cause a bland flavor of ripe figs. Checking your fruit for insects would be a way to see if there is a need for pest control or to rule it out as an issue.

[REPLY](#)**Fred (not verified)** 2 years 8 months ago

All my fig trees were getting to tall and spreading over my neighbors yard. I pruned all my fig trees last winter. This spring they all looked really good. The largest tree really had an abundant crop. Before the figs ripened, on the largest tree, all the leaves started turning yellow and falling off. The tree now appears to be dead. The others are doing well. Is there any way to get the tree to revive next spring or should I just dig it up?

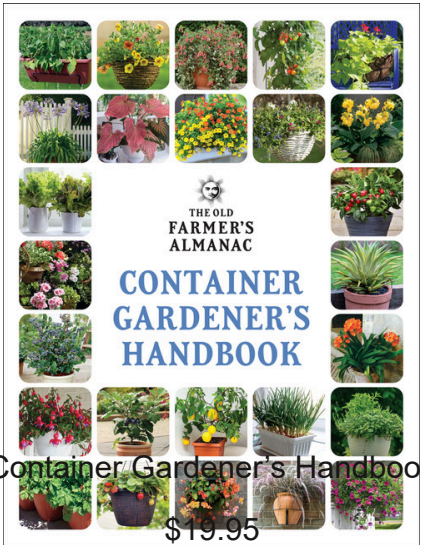
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