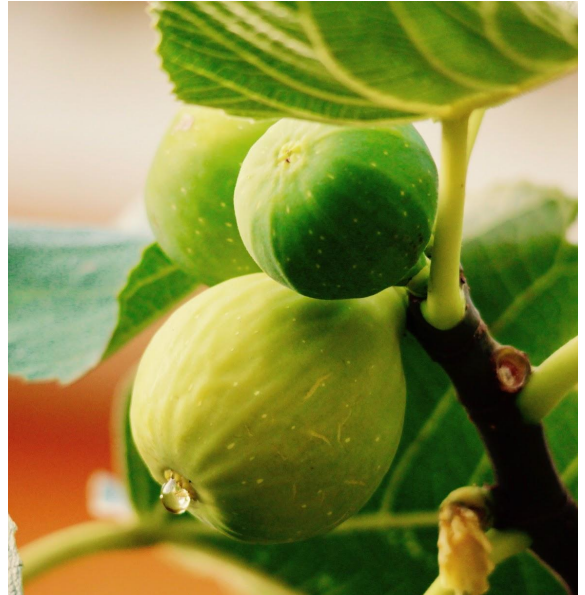


Figs

Ficus carica

A Garden Guide

Figs (*Ficus carica*) are native to Western Asia and the Mediterranean. Figs are thought to be one of the first plants cultivated by humans, with evidence going back to 9000 BCE. In addition to food, figs have a strong cultural history and have been mentioned in many ancient texts. The milky sap of the tree has been traditionally used to deter parasites.



Here in WNC, they can survive, although they need to be sited carefully. They are shrubs, not trees here, and can die to the ground in the winter. It is best to plant them in the spring or summer. Figs planted in the fall may not have enough time to fully establish themselves before winter arrives.

Siting: Figs need to be in a **sunny, protected area**. They need 6-8 hours of direct sunlight to be healthy and productive. The south side of a house or along rock walls work well. **Figs love heat and sun and do not care for the cold.**

Soil and Planting: Figs prefer a soil pH of 6.0-7.0, with moist, well-draining soil. Good drainage is more important than fertility. They have fragile, shallow root systems. In our soils, Figs benefit from $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ soil conditioner mixed with native soil and generous amounts of dolomitic or agricultural lime. Dig a hole 2-3x the width of the pot, 1-1.5x as deep. Applying mycorrhizae directly to the roots, just prior to planting, will improve plant resilience. You may plant the Fig as deep as it was in the pot, or deeper. **Do not fertilize heavily at planting. Prune** back the entire plant by 1/3rd - especially in warm weather - immediately before, during, or after planting - to aid in plant establishment.

Fertilizing: Figs do not need a lot of fertilizer, and are sensitive to overfertilization. Two applications of Tree-Tone® or Happy Frog® Fruit and Flower per year, in spring when new growth appears, and in fall, is sufficient. Too many nutrients can cause issues with fruit growth and development.



Watering: Figs need 1-1.5" of water per week. Too much water can damage shallow roots. Too little water can stress plants and cause them to drop fruits. Wheat straw mulch and grass clippings are excellent lightweight mulches for figs.

Pruning: Established Figs do not need much pruning. Mature plants can be lightly pruned to encourage fresh new growth. Remove all dead, weak, or diseased limbs.

Organic Spray Schedule: Figs usually do not have a lot of issues which require treatment here

in WNC. However, in case of a particularly wet spring, they may benefit from a couple of applications of Copper. You can spray when the first new leaves have developed to a full size, and then spray 4 weeks after that. Be sure to coat both the top AND bottom of the leaves. Take your time, be thorough. Pest issues, if any arise, can usually be dealt with using Neem Oil or Horticulture Oil.

Wildlife: Birds, such as Blue Jays, and wildlife such as squirrels may be keenly interested in your figs. You can plant enough that there's plenty to share. Alternatively, we do carry bird netting, which when weighted down, can thwart squirrel efforts.

Harvesting: It may be 3-4 years before you see a harvest - but they're worth the wait! Eating figs fresh from the tree is an entirely different experience than ones found in grocery stores. Wait for your figs to turn to their mature color. Look at the peduncle or "neck" of the fruit (narrow part above the main area of the fruit): if it has a slight bend instead of sticking straight out, then your figs are ready to be harvested. When picking your figs off the shrub, gently remove the fruit from the stem. Make sure that you don't rip the "neck" during this process. Figs can be stored in a refrigerator for about a week, and they should be placed there once their skin starts to wrinkle or develop creases. If figs are dried either by sitting in the sun for a few hours or in a dehydrator, they can be stored for months.

Winter: Figs benefit from winter protection. You can cover and mulch your figs in late fall and remove when they break dormancy. Version 1.0, Jan 21

