



Common figs (*Ficus carica*) are native to the Middle East and Eastern Europe and have proven themselves in the Houston area for generations. Easy to grow and drought tolerant with a great production rate, they are hard to beat. Allow 100 square feet minimum and you can rely on great crops yearly with proper pruning. Provide good drainage and full sun to part shade for best production. Figs are self-pollinating, so unless you are freezing or canning them, you probably only need one tree. The first crop grows on old wood...last years' growth. The second crop grows on the leaf axillaries of this years' new growth. Remove a portion of old growth yearly to encourage new branches and to promote a good shape. Unfortunately, figs will not continue to ripen once they are removed from the tree. Check your tree daily and pick them as soon as they ripen, from June to August

Figs have few pests or disease problems. The biggest pests are thirsty birds, so placing a bird bath nearby can help with this. If this fails...try bird netting...or Catzilla. A fungus called rust can be an issue. Rust only occurs when the atmospheric conditions are right, like powdery mildew. We recommend 2 applications of Liquid Copper, in late May or early June. Apply the 1<sup>st</sup> application when leaves reach their full size and the 2<sup>nd</sup> application, 3 weeks later. Copper comes out of mines...and is organic...it is safe and usually quite effective. Be sure to thoroughly coat both sides of the leaves and the stems. Remove all old leaf litter to prevent possible reoccurrences.

Leaves that turn yellow and drop prematurely are suffering from stress, due to lack of water. Although drought tolerant, figs need a fair amount of water to produce abundant fruit. If you have a healthy, established fig tree, avoid fertilizing often, which can interfere with fruit production. We recommend using an organic fertilizer... once a year...during late winter.

### Other sources for fig information (and a lot of other plant info):

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu>

<http://plantanswers.tamu.edu>

<http://www.urbanharvest.org>

<http://www.crfg.org/>

**Alma** Although not a beauty in the fig world, Alma gives your taste buds an absolutely delightful ride. Small to medium, golden brown pear-shaped fruit are sweet with a rich but delicate flavor. Introduced by A & M in 1975, this rot resistant variety should be grown within 200 miles of the coast. Closed eye.

**Black Mission** A large fig with black-purple skin and watermelon-pink flesh with a good flavor. Eaten fresh, cooked or dried, this large heirloom variety grows on a heavy producing tree and bears in mid-season. Do not prune after tree reaches maturity. Closed eye.

**Celeste** Small to medium fruit has a violet to brown skin with a white flesh. This firm, juicy and sweet fruit has exceptional flavor. Growing on a small tree, you can expect good production on this hardy, popular variety that begins ripening in late May. Closed eye. July.

**C'est Bon** This is a small, sweet fig that makes great preserves. Bears heavily. Closed eye.

**Golden Celeste** Think Celeste's blonde sister. Medium sized, sweet, amber-pink flesh, heavy producing, and early July ripening. Partially closed eye.





RCW Nurseries

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## 2015 Fig List

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**Hardy Chicago** Resembling Brown Turkey, this small to medium fruit has a violet skin covering a pink pulp. With an excellent flavor and great hardiness, this variety can be a great addition to any garden. Small eye.

**Italian Black** Similar to Brown Turkey, but with a very large fruit that is sweet with amber-pink flesh. This fig grows more like a large bush than a tree. A prolific bearer that sets 2 crops a year. Some guy named Newton used this one as a cookie filling. Closed eye. Ripens in July.

**Italian Honey** A slow growing small tree suitable for a container. One of the hardiest varieties with green skin and sweet, amber flesh can be eaten in any way you like. This variety usually bears 2 crops a year. Closed eye.

**Japanese Green** The young fruit are perky and greener than mature fruit, which droops under its own weight. Great flavor. Closed eye.

**LSU Gold** With striking yellow skin and light red flesh this fig is as pretty to look at as it is tasty to eat. The birds will assume that the yellow fruit is not ripe and leave this one alone. Resistant to splitting and fast growing, this heavy bearer ripens from July thru August. Not for sale to LSU rivals. Closed eye.

**LSU Purple** This bushy plant provides small to medium fruit with purple to burgundy skin and strawberry flesh. With an excellent flavor and a high sugar content, this one is a great choice for our area. Ripening after Celeste, you can extend your harvest production. Closed eye. June.

**Native Black** Large, sweet fruit starts to ripen in July and bears well. They are an Italian heirloom variety that was brought to Louisiana...well that's one possible story anyway. Closed eye.

**O'Rourke** A cross of Celeste and C1, developed at LSU in 1956, this variety screams "I am a child of Celeste"...but ripens a week earlier than mom. Closed eye.

**Osborn Prolific** A sweet, rich flavored light pink pulp wrapped up in a medium bronze to brown skin and hardy...makes this one a winner. Small eye.

**Petite Negra** A naturally dwarf tree that produces a fat, juicy, black skinned fruit with a red flesh. Producing 2 crops a year on a 6 to 8 foot tall and 3 to 4 foot wide bush, all you need is a large pot. Closed eye.

**Smith** A Louisiana heirloom variety with a dark red flesh and yellow skin. The flavor has been described as one of the best, a sweet, rich flavor. Partially closed eye.

**Texas Blue Giant** Very large, sweet, purple skinned fruit has amber flesh. It has a great flavor, fresh or dried. It has an ever-bearing habit that thrives in hot areas. Closed eye.

**Texas Everbearing (Brown Turkey)** The most common fig in Texas, bears a medium sized, bell shaped fruit with amber flesh and almost no seeds. The mild and sweet flavor of this heirloom fig makes it an excellent choice for eating fresh, drying or cooking. Winter hardy and bears from mid-July 'til frost. Closed eye.

**Tiger** Self-fertile, small to medium fruit with yellow and green striping on the outside with strawberry colored flesh. Closed eye.



15809 Tomball Parkway



Houston, TX 77086



281-440-5161



### Fig Facts

- Figs are actually a flower and not a fruit, the seeds are the true fruit.
- If you are allergic to latex, you are could be allergic to figs.
- Figs are low fat, low sodium and cholesterol free.
- Figs are a good source of fiber, iron, calcium and potassium.
- Figs need to ripen and dry slightly on the tree before harvest.
- Harvest figs after they turn the color they are supposed to be (know your fig).
- Ripe figs will droop on the tree, while unripe figs stand out straight.
- Fresh figs should be handled carefully, their skin is very thin and easily damaged.
- Do not pile ripe figs up, the ones on the bottom of the pile can split from the weight above them.
- Freeze figs within 12 hours of harvesting.
- Freeze figs in a single layer on a cookie sheet. Bag them after they are frozen.
- Fully ripened figs can be frozen for up to 6 months.
- Refrigerate figs for up to 1 week after harvest, do not leave them on the counter.
- Don't put figs in Jello fruit salad, the gelatin won't set.
- Figs can be used as a coffee substitute, should there ever be a coffee shortage (just shoot me if that happens).
- Adding figs to cakes, cookies and breads keeps them fresh and moist longer (which is why fruit cake lasts forever).
- Trying to eat healthier? Use fig puree as a fat substitute in baked goods.
- Trying to get more calcium in your diet? Substitute ½ cup of figs for ½ cup of milk.
- Fig Newtons® first hit the markets in 1892.

Now, go out and grow some figs!

