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Welcome to

Fig-ure It Out: Mastering the Art of Growing Fig Trees

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— GUY —

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History

The fig tree originated in the Near East and has been cultivated for thousands of years. The fig was spread throughout the Mediterranean region by the Greeks and Romans. In 1769, the Spanish brought the first fig trees to the region that would later be called California.



Use your cellphone
to visit the
Smithsonian
Magazine article
titled "*In California,
the Search for the
Ultimate Wild Fig
Heats Up*".

Sycophant comes from the Greek word *sykophantēs* which was used in the legal system of ancient Athens. The term was used to describe someone who made an accusation against another person for illegally exporting figs. Ancient Olympians were awarded figs (Σύκο/Σύκα), becoming the first Olympic medal. Greeks believed figs had restorative powers.

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Hardiness Zones

The USDA (**United States Department of Agriculture**) developed the hardiness zone system to help gardeners choose plants that can survive in their area.

A hardiness zone is a geographic area with a **specific average annual minimum temperature**.

planthardiness.ars.usda.gov

- Each zone is further divided into "A" and "B" areas for greater accuracy.
- The zones are based on **average annual minimum winter temperatures**, separated out by a margin of 10 degrees Fahrenheit.
- The continental US only ranges from zone 3 to 10.

Why are zones important?

Knowing your hardiness zone is important because it helps you choose plants that can survive and thrive in your particular area.

White Kadota fig trees can grow in USDA hardiness zones 7–11.

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In the ground or have it potted?

The age old question.

- Consider the hardiness zone you are in.
- Planting requires winterization, but it is easier to maintain.
- Planting requires good drainage.
- A potted fig tree is easier to winterize, but you must have a garage, basement, or cellar.
- In zones 7 and above, a planted fig tree will produce more fruit.
- Planning on moving? A potted fig tree is a better choice for you.
- Potted figs require more watering. Are you going on a three-week vacation?
- Potted figs need fertilization every year.
- Potted figs may need to be placed on a dolly for transportation.
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Watering and Caring for Your Fig Trees

- Figs like warm weather and plenty of sun.
- Inconsistent watering will affect fig production.
- Do not allow the leaves to wilt.
- If the tree is potted, allow water to drip from the bottom of the pot.
- If the weather is hot and dry, water the tree daily.
- Do **not** plant it right next to the foundation.
- Planted, mature fig trees require much less watering (once a week).
- Mulching a tree will reduce evaporation and will conserve moisture (but away from the trunk).
- Water the tree early in the morning.
- Conserving some rain water is a plus.
- Ensure the pots have great drainage, off the ground.
- Do not plant beans near figs.

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Fertilizing Your Fig Tree

- I like to use an all-purpose, balanced NPK fertilizer, such as 8-8-8 or 10-10-10.
 - How does NPK help plants?
 - **Nitrogen:** Helps leaves grow
 - **Phosphorus:** Helps roots, flowers, buds, and fruits grow
 - **Potassium:** Helps plants resist disease and be generally healthy
- The type of fertilizer—whether for tomatoes or fruit trees—is inconsequential. Only the NPK ratio matters.
- You can take a 20-20-20 fertilizer and reduce it to a 10-10-10 or 5-5-5.
- Avoid over-applying fertilizer.
- Too much nitrogen will lead to excessive leaf growth and fewer figs.
- **Do not** fertilize dormant trees.
- Spread the fertilizer evenly around the base of the tree, keeping it a few inches away from the trunk.

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Fall Pruning

- Hydrogen peroxide is your friend.
- **Main** crop figs grow on **new** wood/branches.
- **Breva** crop figs grow on **last year's** wood/branches.
- If you don't prune it, the tree will grow irregularly.
- Prune to access fruit easily.
- Do not prune trees that are two feet or shorter.
- The white liquid that comes out of a fig tree is latex, also known as fig milk or sap.
- **Prune:**
 - AFTER dormancy or BEFORE they wake up.
 - Remove thin branches (those thinner than a pencil) entirely.
 - Use a saw to cut thicker branches.
 - Remove weak, sick or spindly branches.
 - Cut branches growing toward the center.
- **References (From my YouTube Channel)**
 - [How to Prune a Variety of Fig Trees](#)
 - [Splitting and Root Pruning a Fig Tree](#)
 - [Checking figs for dormancy. One more fig to go...](#)

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Root Pruning for Potted Fig Trees

- Best time is in early spring.
- Remove 1/3 of the root mass.
- Use a pruning saw,
- Every 2-3 years
- From my YouTube channel: [Splitting and Root Pruning a Fig Tree](#)

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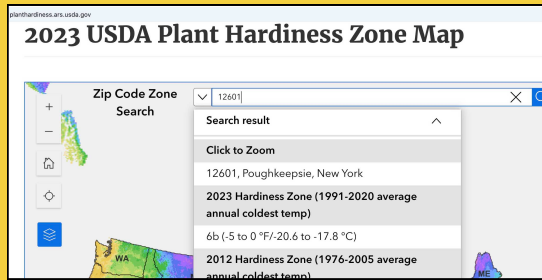
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Winterizing Your Fig Tree



- **Why do we need to winterize?:**
 - Cold temperatures will damage branches and buds and will impact fruit production, if left unprotected.
- Prune first.
- Wait for the tree to lose its leaves (go dormant) AND then wait for two more weeks.
- **Potted:**
 - In a garage, basement or cellar. No need to wrap.
 - Place it next to the exterior wall of your house and what it.
 - Water once a month with about 1 cup of water.
 - **DO NOT** fertilize during dormancy.
 - Stop fertilizing around mid-October before winterizing.
 - Consider rodent protection.
- **Planted:**
 - Winterization materials—such as leaves, wood chips, etc.—should be dry.
 - Water and moisture are your enemy.
 - **I use:**
 - Water pipe insulation to wrap branches and mulch heavily around the base of the tree.
 - Burlap.
 - Concrete curing blanket.
 - I make sure water is diverted away from the fig tree.
 - When it's warmer I "aerate" the tree by removing the blanket.
- **References from my [YouTube Channel](#):**
 - [Green Fig Preserves recipe](#)
 - [Watering my figs winterized in cellar](#)
 - [Watering potted figs in February](#)

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Cloning/Propagating

- **Why clone a tree?:**

- To grow more trees that are genetically identical to the parent tree.
- For business reasons.
- To share clones of your tree with others.
- For fun.

- **Different Ways of Cloning:**

- Using Cuttings:
 - Green wood.
 - Dormant wood.
 - In water.
 - Using the fig-pop method.
- Air layering branches.
- Ground layering branches.
- Bud grafting.
- By simply sticking a branch in potting soil.

- **References:**

- [Green Fig Preserves recipe](#)
- [Rooting Green Fig Cuttings](#)
- [Green Fig Preserves recipe](#)

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Fig Cutting Anatomy



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- Make sure you have the correct orientation, top and bottom.