



GUIDE TO GROWING FIG TREES IN THE NORTHEAST

Fig trees are semi-tropical in origin. They thrive in areas where winter temperatures do not drop below 15 °F (-10 °C). Very young trees can be damaged by fall frosts when the temperature falls below 25 °F (-4 °C).

Fig trees will grow in a variety of soils ranging from sandy loams to clay loams.

PLANTING

When planting, it is best to prune the tree back to 24" or 30" (60 cm or 75 cm), unless the tree is already branched. The hole should be 3 times the diameter of the root ball. Mix in a handful of lime when you backfill and water well. Do not fertilize the tree at planting time. Young trees benefit from the placement of a stake (support) upon planting.

PRUNING

Always prune branches to an outward facing bud (similar to roses). This will result in the tree having an open center to permit the entry of air and light. All pruning should take place while the tree is dormant.

FERTILIZING

Fig trees are not heavy feeders, however, if the growth is not satisfactory, they may be fed with a fruit tree fertilizer. A mulch of limestone chips will be beneficial to the tree.

EXPOSURE

As much sun as possible.

Available Fig Tree Varieties (Pick Up Only)

Celeste	Medium size fruit, light brown, violet blush, heavy bearer, relatively hardy, very sweet
Brown Turkey	Large size fruit, brown, heavy bearer, relatively hardy, sweet
Marseilles	Medium size fruit, yellow, good bearer, very sweet
Verte	Medium size fruit, green, good bearer, relatively hardy, sweet
Magnolia	Large size fruit, brown-yellow, sweet
Melanzana	Large size fruit, brown-purple, sweet
Jelly	Good size fruit, yellow, similar to Marseilles

WINTER PROTECTION

The trees are ideally planted near a south-facing wall or solid fence. When the tree becomes dormant in the fall they should be wrapped with some insulating material. Some choices are:

Carpet	Layers of Canvas
Blankets/Quilts	Pink Fiberglass
Foam Under-Carpet	

All insulating material should extend from the ground to the top of the plant. This should be topped with a plastic sheet or large plastic bag in order to keep the insulation dry. Under no circumstances should the plastic contact the tree itself.

PLANTING IN CONTAINERS

The culture of fig trees in containers is becoming more common today. In many cold winter areas, this is the most practical way of growing them. Figs in containers can be stored in basements or attached garages. If an unheated and unattached garage is the only option, the tree should be wrapped before storing. Fig trees in storage during winter should not be watered except perhaps one cup (8 oz.) of water per month to prevent the soil from becoming powdery.

The tree should be dormant when it is brought indoors. A dormant tree is leafless. The tree should be checked during the winter to see if it has started growing. If the tree has come into growth, it must be brought into good light immediately. The tree can be prevented from coming into growth prematurely by keeping it in a cold and dark location.

PROPAGATION

The tree should be moved to the outdoors (if dormant) around mid spring. If the tree has leaves, you must wait until after the last frost. Trees may be moved to a larger container every year until you have reached the largest pot you can handle. At this point the tree should be root pruned every three years and replaced in the same pot. Container grown plants will also benefit from a limestone chip mulch.

Fig trees may be propagated from semi-woody cuttings of 12 inches in length. Place the cutting in a pot containing a sterile rooting medium (vermiculite). Put a plastic bag over the pot and place it in a spot which has good light but no direct sun. Check frequently for rooting. When rooting occurs (about 6 weeks), gently lift and place in potting soil, water well, and grow on.