

Varieties and Planting of Figs

Middle Georgia supports a wide variety of fig trees.

For best growth, fig trees need full sunlight and freedom from competing trees and shrubs. A good place is on the sunniest side of a building. Plant the trees about four feet from the building. The roots will grow under the building and be protected from nematode injury.

Most people are fond of figs, and rightfully so. They are very tasty and can be eaten fresh, preserved, or used for baking and making desserts like ice cream

To be a successful fig gardener, follow a few suggestions.

Since there is considerable confusion about fig variety names and mislabeled varieties, it is best to order fig plants only from Southeastern nurseries. Never purchase or attempt to grow the kinds of figs grown in California. They require pollination by a tiny wasp that cannot survive under Georgia climatic conditions.

Middle Georgia fig favorites...

The fig varieties recommended for the Middle Georgia area produce a main crop of fruit that ripens in midsummer. Some varieties also produce a small, early crop on old wood. This early crop is called the breba crop. Fruit of the breba crop is lower in quality than the main crop. If breba fruit is not to be eaten, pick and discard it. This aids in pest control.

Celeste, or sugar fig, is the main variety recommended for home planting in Middle Georgia. The fresh fruit quality of this variety is superior to other varieties grown in the South. The fruit is small and light brown to violet. During the dormant season, the wood of Celeste is slightly more tolerant to cold than the wood of other varieties. During extremely hot weather, this variety may drop part of its crop.

Brown Turkey is another variety that can be planted in this area. Although the wood of Brown Turkey is not as cold hardy as that of Celeste, after a severe freeze, suckers will usually develop from the roots to form a new plant. The fruit of Brown Turkey is excellent in quality, bronze colored and medium in

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Plant in dormant season...

Figs should be planted while they are dormant; spring is the best time. In warm areas, bare-rooted trees can be set out in fall or early winter. Where late spring frosts are common, it is best to set them out in spring after the danger of a hard winter freeze has passed. Container-grown plants should always be planted in spring.

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Prefer the sunny side...

For best growth, fig trees need full sunlight and freedom from competing trees and shrubs. A good place is on the sunniest side of a building. Plant the trees about four feet from the building. The roots will grow under the building and be protected from nematode injury.

Fig roots will not damage masonry foundations or steel pipe. They may, however, damage clay sewer pipe. Therefore, do not plant fig trees within 25 feet of clay sewer pipe or over septic tank drain fields.

If you plant fig trees in a lawn; maintain a two to three foot, grass free area, around each tree at least a year or two, until the tree becomes established.

Do not plant fig trees close to rapid-growing plants. They will use water and nutrients needed by the tree.

Figs from nurseries may be grown in the field and sold bare-rooted, or they may be grown in containers and sold in the container.

Before planting a bare-rooted tree, prune about one-third of its top, unless it was topped by the nursery. Container-grown plants can be transplanted without being pruned; they need only to be removed from the container and set in the planting hole.

Set trees in the planting hole three or four inches deeper than they were in the nursery. Fill the hole with soil; water heavily enough to settle the soil around the roots.

Though fig plants can be trained to either tree or bush form, the tree form is generally not practical for the South. In this region, fig plants are frequently frozen back to the ground, making the tree form difficult to maintain.

For more information on fig varieties and planting contact your local county Extension office.

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