



January Newsletter 2002

Fabulous Figs



A fresh fig is one of the most beautiful fruits of the Mediterranean. They can be eaten fresh, dried, roasted, stewed, preserved, added to salads or soaked in liqueur and served over icecream. If you are wanting to make a simple dish look special just add some halved figs.

The fig is fascinating in its structure with the edible pulp actually being the remains of their interior flower. They are a hardy tree and easy to grow providing you follow their basic requirements. Figs will tolerate a wide range of climates but yield best in areas with a relatively dry summer. In coastal areas summer rain can cause figs to split. Young trees are susceptible to frost and should be protected during their first and second winters. Mature trees can withstand quite severe frosts.

Plentiful sunlight is the key to a good fruit crop. Early morning sun is especially important as it will dry dew from plants therefore reducing the incidence of disease.

Good drainage is the most important consideration. When planting the fig fill the planting hole with water and make sure it drains away within half an hour. Areas of poor drainage restrict oxygen to the roots resulting in the stunting and often the eventual death of the tree.

Planting Fig trees do well when planted out during winter and early summer. If planting more than one tree allow 6 to 7m between trees.

Pruning A newly planted tree, if a single stem, should be headed at about 60cm from the ground, and then three developing branches selected to form the initial framework. These are later shortened back to allow for further branches to develop thus allowing a strong framework to be built. Fig trees bear their fruit in the axils of leaves on the current season's wood. To encourage the production of a good crop on vigorous new wood the annual growth should be cut back about a third of its length each winter.

Fertilisers

Fertilisers are usually necessary in most home garden soils to maintain good tree vigour and high production. Use a fertiliser with a NPK complete fertiliser.

When **harvesting** and for the most delicious figs allow the fruit to partly ripen on the tree. Be sure to pick the fruit as it ripens otherwise spoilage will occur resulting in souring of fruit. When harvesting use gloves and long sleeves to prevent skin irritation from the fig latex. A tree usually begins to bear from 2 to 3 years after planting.

Varieties

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The common figs listed in our catalogue develop parthenocarpically (that is produce fruit without fertilization). They are divided into two groups being dark-skinned and light-skinned figs.

Dark skinned

Brown Turkey This variety is highly recommended due to its long ripening season compared to the other varieties. The good quality fruit is recommended for fresh eating in contrast to drying or preserving. The fruits are medium sized with thin, tough brown skin tinged with purple. The pulp is a rosy pink with a rich flavour. Fruit is harvested during February, March and April.

Black Genoa is a large sized fig with purple skin and dark red flesh. The flavour is very rich and sweet with fair quality. The fruit is best suited for fresh eating. This is a very vigorous and productive variety that is often seen growing commercially due to its high yields. The Black Genoa matures slightly earlier than Brown Turkey.

Light-skinned

White Adriatic (Verdone, Adriatic) forms into a large tree. The fruit is a light greenish-yellow with an attractive deep-pink flesh. The flavour is excellent, the pulp being a light strawberry red. Performs well in warmer areas and is well suited to drying. The fruit matures in February and March.

Excel is a medium to large fruit with light greenish-yellow skin. The pulp is a light amber with a high sugar content. It is excellent for fresh fruit, preserving or drying. Highly recommended due to its virtual non-splitting. Superb. Harvested early February.

Prestons Prolific Very thick flesh, creamy white and juicy, with sweet flavour. Extremely vigorous and late cropping. Harvested February to March.

Delicious Fig Jam

3 cups fresh figs
5 apples
2 lemons, juice and rind
4 cups sugar

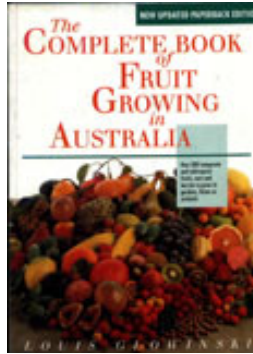
Slice the figs, and peel, core and slice the apples. Put all the fruit in a pan and cook slowly until all are tender, then boil fast for 10 minutes. Add sugar, stir it in well, then boil fast again until the jam sets.

Drying Figs

Figs can be dried at home and in many countries this is done simply by spreading really ripe fruit out in the sun and turning it frequently so that all surfaces are exposed. Take them in at night. They can also be dried indoors in a hot, dry atmosphere or an open oven taking care not to go above 135.

A Christmas/New Year invitation to our readers

Visit the Nursery - The festive season is a great time to drop into the nursery and say hello. We love to meet our customers and Emma has bundles of great Christmas specials available in the retail department. To take advantage of this offer be sure to mention that



you saw it on our website or in your December newsletter.

These are some of the great offers available during December, January and February in our retail section. All you need to do is purchase \$200 or more worth of trees and the following gifts are yours -**FREE!!!**

Not only will you receive a discount of 10% on your purchase, but we will also add a xmas gift of 16 Rainforest Trees valued at \$32 completely **FREE**, and

A **FREE** copy of Louis Glowinski's brilliant book, 'The Complete Book of Fruit Growing in Australia'. (380 pages of fruitfull information), the best fruit tree reference in Australia. Normal Retail price \$49.

This gift totals \$100 FREE for all orders \$200 and over.

NB: *This offer does not apply to mail orders or delivery services. Offer applies only upon visitation to the nursery during trading hours. One gift offer per person per day. Valid only until 28 February 2002.*

Passionfruit

Pollination of Passionfruit

One of the main challenges when growing passionfruit is in obtaining a satisfactory fruit set in some of the varieties. This set only occurs when an abundance of pollinators are present. A good way to increase pollination is to attract more bees. A good way to do this is to interplant with a purple and yellow passionfruit that between them have their flowers open from dawn to dusk. Hand pollination greatly increases fruit set and size.

For successful hand pollination ensure the flower is fully open (receptive) then with a cotton bud remove pollen from the Anthers and deposit it on the Stigma. The Stigma is receptive from the time of flower opening to closing. Pollen is released before the flower opens and before the stigma is receptive.

Frequently Asked Questions

<p>Why don't my passionfruit set fruit?</p>	<p>Poor pollination. This is the main cause and can be due to bees not working the flowers; temperatures being too low or too high for pollination (optimum temperatures are between 20°C and 30°C); or strong winds or rain.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Boron deficiency· Extended periods of overcast weather. This can cause flower drop regardless of pollination problems.
<p>Why is the fruit dropping off the vine?</p>	<p>Rootrot is the main problem, and the only cure is prevention. Grow Passionfruit in well drained soil. They plants aren't long lived, and can be replaced after 5 or 6 years. Give the plants a dressing of a balanced fertiliser several times a year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Irregular watering in which the vines at times get insufficient water· Fungal diseases· Fruit fly and severe mite damage, particularly with young fruit.
<p>Why are the leaves turning yellow?</p>	<p>The most common cause of leaves going yellow is passionfruit woodiness virus. Other possible causes are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Magnesium deficiency· Nitrogen deficiency on sandy soil· 'winter yellows' brought on by cold weather, windy conditions, low humidity or a combination.

Why is the fruit bumpy of malformed or shrivelled?

- The main causes for this is:
- Woodiness virus. The most likely cause, particularly if the vines aren't growing well and there are some yellowing of the leaves.
 - Boron deficiency
 - Insect damage, particularly fruit fly.
 - Sucking bug damage
 - Poor pollination
 - Insufficient irrigation when a heavy crop is set

Passionfruit Varieties

Grafted Varieties

TOM'S SPECIAL A freak hybrid from Burringbar in Northern NSW. It bears fruit of excellent quality and seems to have a high degree of tolerance to fungal diseases. This variety was used in breeding work that has resulted in some promising selections being made notably the Super Sweet Selections.

SUPER SWEET-AV1 Grafted Pink Skinned passionfruit cropping most of the year. Large with sweet juicy pulp and good disease resistance. Most promising Selection to date. The Pink skin is a negative but as consumer begin to relate the quality to this variety it should become more popular.

Seedling Varieties

PASSIONFRUIT, BANANA *Passiflora antioquiensis*. *P.mollissima* and *P.mixta*. The name 'banana passionfruit' is most often given to either *P.mollissima*. The fruit quality is good however it lacks the sweetness of the improved varieties. This variety is widespread throughout South America where it is grown commercially for juice. The yellow oblong fruits are approximately 10 to 15cm long with a citrus tasting overtone. The species grows vigorously and shoots develop from the roots after frost injury.

PASSIONFRUIT, PURPLE *Passiflora edulis* This fast growing vine is vigorous, very easy to



maintain, and quite ornamental with it's dark green, glossy leaves and interesting purple and white fringed flowers. The vine needs something to climb on. The fruit are a bit bigger than golf ball size, purple skinned, and produced in profusion. They are ready when they fall from the vine. The fruit are excellent at this stage, but become even sweeter and more flavoured if they are collected and allowed to shrivel slightly. Fruit have to be collected

from the ground regularly, because they can sunburn. Vines begin to bear from one to two years from planting out. Whilst fruit is mainly harvested during the summer months, a winter crop is possible in warmer areas.

PASSIONFRUIT, YELLOW *Passiflora edulis* var. *flavicarpa*- 'Golden passionfruit', 'Hawaiian passionfruit' . The yellow form is identical in all respects to the purple plant, except that the fruit are a mid yellow colour, and often slightly smaller. They withstand some less than ideal soil conditions better than the purple form. The yellow passionfruit grown in many tropical areas may be different from the true *P.edulis* var. *flavicarpa* because it is larger than even the purple form, has a thicker fruit wall, and a slightly more acid flavour. The foliage is lighter, and larger. Requires two plants for cross-pollination. A more tropical variety than the black with some selections being quite acid. This variety is used as a rootstock for the grafted types due to its high disease tolerance and vigour.

PASSIONFRUIT, SWEET GRANADILLA *Passiflora ligularis* -This very vigorous vine has somewhat heart shaped leaves and very attractive large white and purple fringed flowers. It requires something fairly strong to climb up, and will reward you with orange round fruit, sometimes blushed purple, about half way between golf ball and tennis ball size, with a brittle fruit wall enclosing opaque white pulp that is sweet, perfumed and aromatic. One of the sweetest of the passionfruit it originated from mountains above 3,000m and therefore will only tolerate a very light frost.

PASSIONFRUIT, GIANT GRANADILLA *Passiflora quadrangularis* This is the queen and king of all passionfruit-at least in terms of size. The fruit can be as big as a melon! They fruit virtually year round, and in the best conditions, a single vine can produce upward of a hundred fruit. The plants are extensive growers. The flowers are very large, up to 12cm in diameter, spectacular with purple and white filaments against the red sepals. The fruit are up to 30cm long, oblong with a delicate aroma and thin, smooth skin which may have a few faint ridges. Inside is an inch or more of firm whitish or pinkish flesh and a large central cavity filled with a mass of purplish-pink pulp that surrounds large dark seeds. Thrives in a warm humid climate and will die if temperature fall below 13C.

PASSIONFRUIT, WATER LEMON *Passiflora laurifolia* 'Jamaican Honeysuckle', 'Jamaican watermelon'. A moderately vigorous climber to 10m or more. The highly fragrant flowers are up to 15cm across with red or purple sepals and petals. The rind is leather to 3mm thick, white and spongy withing; becomes hard when dry. Very pleasantly rose-scented, the translucent, almost white pulp is very sweet and juicy. The water lemon flowers open only in the afternoon and are apparently not self-pollinated or if so only slightly so. Cross-pollination is required for good crops. Hand pollination is advised for best fruit set.

PASSIONFRUIT, PANAMA The Panama Passionfruit is a tropical passionfruit from the same species as the golden passionfruit. It produces purple or golden fruit. It has a larger fruit than the hybrid varieties but a lower pulp to weight ration. For commercial growing Panama and other golden passionfruit selections are best suited to a true tropical climate, however they are well suited for subtropical conditions for the home orchard. Growth will slow and the pulp content of the fruit will diminish during the cooler months.



Grapes

*Simple techniques
for successful
grape growing for
the home gardener*



Grapes are easy to grow in the home garden providing a welcome source of fresh fruit and shade for outdoor living areas. One vine will yield enough fruit to keep the average consumer supplied for a few weeks. However, if you want to produce wine you will need a larger planting. Expect to pick 2 - 4kg from a vine (1 - 2 litres of wine). Wine makers suggest at least 50kg of fruit is needed to get a decent ferment.

While there are many varieties of grapes available the performance of any one variety is greatly influenced by local growing conditions and climate. When choosing grape varieties, it is important to select from those that are adapted to your region. The grapes listed below are well suited to warmer coastal positions and have a higher resistance to mildew diseases.

Consider the disease and insect resistance of the variety. Disease resistance is particularly important in eastern NSW and Qld as the humid conditions encourage disease growth. Purchase recommended grapes for your region.

Grapes require full sunlight. They can be grown on a wide range of soil types, as long as there is adequate drainage and moisture retention. Raised beds will help overcome slight soil drainage problems. The best soils are loams or sandy loams with added organic matter. Plants stressed by drought often have more disease problems and lower yield than plants that have received adequate water. Ensure that the area around the plants are weed free and have been well mulched. Plant grapes 2 - 3 metres apart.

The most important consideration is to obtain healthy and disease-free plants. Grapevines often show very few visible symptoms of virus disease, but infected plants do poorly and produce little fruit. A very common disease of grape plants is herbicide injury. Hand weeding, where practical, is a good idea.

Wine Grapes

Chambourcin - is a late-ripening grape that can produce a highly rated red wine when the fruit is fully mature. A highly productive vine, it requires a long growing season and warm winter temperatures. The large, moderately loose bunches set medium-sized blue berries. The foliage is resistant to downy mildew, but moderately susceptible to powdery mildew. Wines from this grape are higher in tannins than other French-American hybrids.

Black Table Grapes

Carolina Black Rose- Excellent size, colour and texture. Very good disease resistance. Best home garden variety available.

Flame Seedless Grape - is a medium small sized grape that is seedless, firm skinned and tender fleshed. It has a mild, sweet/tart flavour and when ripe is a dark flame to rust red colour. The bunches are long and full.

White Table Grapes

Lady Patricia - A white grape well suited to subtropical conditions. Produces large clusters of lady-finger shaped grapes. Tender flesh with sweet slightly astringent flesh.

Pink Iona - Sweet variety with pinkish skin and high resistance to downy mildew. Very hardy and well suited to coastal conditions.

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