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TREE FRUIT: APRICOTS



Alfred



Moorpark

Varieties A-Z

ALFRED

The fruit is smaller than *Moorpark*, but it ripens earlier and the tree is less prone to die-back. Flesh is orange and juicy. There are two drawbacks — flowers appear early and the tree tends to be a biennial cropper.

Type: Apricot

Fruit size: Medium

Skin colour: Orange, flushed with pink

Picking time: Early August

FARMINGDALE

An American variety which has earned a good reputation over here as an outdoor Apricot. It ripens early and the flesh has an excellent flavour. It crops heavily and exhibits some resistance to die-back. Definitely worth trying.

Type: Apricot

Fruit size: Medium

Skin colour: Golden-yellow, flushed with red

Picking time: Late July

MOORPARK

By far the most popular variety and the only one offered by many nurseries. The orange flesh of this round variety has a very good flavour and the tree is renowned for its reliability — but it is prone to die-back.

Type: Apricot

Fruit size: Large

Skin colour: Golden-yellow, flushed with red

Picking time: Late August

NEW LARGE EARLY

The oval fruit is larger and ripens earlier than *Moorpark* — the flavour is good but not as sweet as *Farmingdale*. Reputed to be robust and hardy with good die-back resistance. Not many nurseries offer this one.

Type: Apricot

Fruit size: Large

Skin colour: Pale orange, flushed with red

Picking time: Early August

Pruning

BUSHES

Plant a 2 or 3 year old north-trained tree. Follow the training procedure.

Plant a 2 or 3 year old partly trained tree. Follow the training procedure for Plum bushes — see page 36. Prune in early February.

For pruning of established trees follow the routine given for acid Cherry bushes — see page 40.

FANS

Plant a 2 or 3 year old partly trained tree. Follow the training procedure for Peach fans — see page 44.

For pruning of established trees follow the routine given for Plum fans — see page 36.

Seasonal care

Hessian or netting placed over the fan or dwarf bush in early spring should be used to protect the blossom from frost damage. Support the net away from the flowers to avoid harming them. Remove during the day.

Water regularly in dry weather — apply up to 3 gallons per sq. yard every 10 days until there is prolonged rainfall. Never let the soil dry out — this is especially important with a newly-planted tree and when the fruits are beginning to swell.

Thinning will be necessary if the crop is heavy. Wait until the average fruit is about the size of a cherry and then remove the smallest and most crowded ones. Repeat the process until the fruits are 2-3 in. apart.

Feeding & Mulching

See page 21. Each spring mulch the plants with a 1 in. layer of organic matter.

Picking & Storage

Apricots become soft several days before they are ready for picking. Harvest them when they come away easily from the tree. Handle gently — the fruit bruises very easily. Keep indoors for about a day before eating. Apricots store much better than Peaches — they can be kept for several weeks in a cool place. Lay them unwrapped in a box lined with tissue.

Apricots can be bottled, dried or frozen — remove the stones before freezing.

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FIGS

Figs are a strange fruit — their cultivation involves techniques which you will find nowhere else in this book. It is not even easy to classify them. Tree fruit in this and several other textbooks — soft fruit in some catalogues.

Figs are quite easy to grow. They are not grafted on to rootstocks and they do not need a pollination partner. Any soil will do as long as it drains reasonably freely, and the trees can withstand the winters in southern and western counties. Spraying is not necessary as pest and disease attack are rare. This ease, however, only applies to the tree as an ornamental plant — it is difficult to induce a Fig tree to produce a worthwhile crop every year. Read this section before deciding to buy one — like most gardeners you will probably decide that a Peach, Grape vine or Melon would be a much more desirable exotic.

The first problem concerns root growth — if left unrestricted the tree grows too vigorously and few fruit develop. To prevent this the roots are restricted by planting in a 15 in. pot or in a lined pit — see below. Pot-grown Figs can be trained as a fan against a wall or maintained as a dwarf bush — bush Figs can be kept in a greenhouse or else left outdoors for most of the year and then brought indoors during the leafless period when frosts threaten.

A sheltered wall facing the South or South-West is the place for a Fig. Greenhouse culture is feasible — you will get two crops instead of one each year if you can maintain a temperature of 55°F from January onwards. But do think carefully — Figs are leafy and cast a lot of shade.

Another problem is winter protection for outdoor crops. This year's Figs were present last year as tiny (embryo) fruits. These embryo fruits and young shoots must be individually covered during winter.

During the growing season the crop needs regular attention. Frequent watering is essential — during dry weather in summer you will have to irrigate twice a week. Shoots have to be pruned in June and unwanted Figs have to be removed in late September — see page 48. Obviously Figs are *not* for the lazy gardener, but they are a worthy challenge for the keen gardener who wants to



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TREE FRUIT:
FIGS

see just how delicious a home-grown Fig can be. There are two types — the green varieties which have greenish skin and pale flesh, and the purple varieties with brown or purple skin and red flesh. For outdoor cultivation the reliable *Brown Turkey* is the usual choice — under glass the superb-tasting *Bourjasotte Grise* is worth trying.



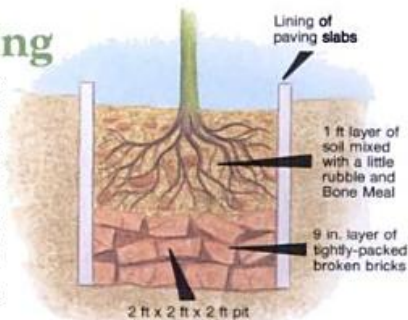
Planting

Choose a well-sheltered spot which is exposed to the sun. Plant fans 12-15 ft apart. November to March is the recommended planting period — March is the best time.

The traditional method is to construct a Fig pit, as shown here. An easier method is to plant in a large tub or a 15 in. pot. Make sure that the container has adequate drainage holes, crock well and use a soil-based compost. In both pits and pots you should plant very firmly.

The pot can be stood in a sunny sheltered part of the garden, to be moved into a shed when frost threatens. If the Fig is to be grown against a wall as a fan then the pot should be sunk up to its rim in the earth close to the wall.

Repotting will be necessary every 2-3 years — do this in late winter.



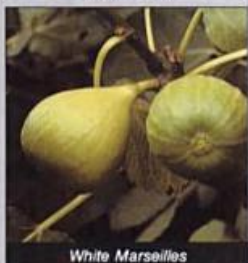
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TREE FRUIT: FIGS



Brown Turkey



White Marseilles

Varieties A-Z

BOURJASOTTE GRISE

This one is strictly for growing in the greenhouse — it is too tender for outdoors. The fruits are rounder than the other varieties listed here and the flavour is better — probably the richest and sweetest Fig you can grow. Good for pot cultivation.

Type: Green Fig

Fruit size: Medium-large

Skin colour: Pale green

Picking time: September

BROWN TURKEY

For many years this has been the No.1 choice — it is suitable for outdoors or under glass. A reliable and heavy cropper producing oval fruit — the red flesh has a rich and sweet flavour. Usually the only Fig offered in the catalogue.

Type: Purple Fig

Fruit size: Medium-large

Skin colour: Brownish-red.
Blue bloom

Picking time: August-September

BRUNSWICK

Not as popular as *Brown Turkey*, but it does come next in the rankings. An oval-shaped fruit like *Brown Turkey*, but it is larger and also ripens about a couple of weeks earlier. The flavour is very good but the tree is not as reliable as its rival and the yields are lower.

Type: Green Fig

Fruit size: Very large

Skin colour: Greenish-yellow,
flushed with brown

Picking time: Mid August

WHITE MARSEILLES

This variety ripens at about the same time as *Brown Turkey*, but that is the only similarity. The fruit of *White Marseilles* is distinctly Pear-shaped, and the whitish flesh is almost transparent. It has a good reputation for pot culture.

Type: Green Fig

Fruit size: Large

Skin colour: Pale green

Picking time: August-September

Pruning

Buy a 2 or 3 year old partly trained tree. For a bush follow the training procedure for Apple bushes — see page 22. For a fan follow the training procedure for Peach fans — see page 44.

Pruning of established bushes and fans takes place in June. All young shoots should be pinched back so that only 5 leaves remain — this will encourage new fruiting shoots to form. In the case of fans tie these shortened growths to the wires.

Thin out the fruits in late September. The embryo Figs which should be retained are close to

the end of the shoots and are about pea-sized. These will develop into fruit for picking next year. At this late September stage all the ripe fruit will have been picked, but you will also find some cherry-sized Figs which will not ripen — remove them.

In spring clean up the tree. Remove branches killed by frost and on a fan remove buds which are pointing directly inwards or outwards from the wall.

Seasonal care

Winter protection of young shoots and embryo fruits is vital. Move a pot-grown plant into a shed, garage or greenhouse. For plants which can't be moved indoors it will be necessary to tie a covering of straw or bracken loosely around the tender parts. Put on this cover in late autumn — remove gradually during April and May.

Regular watering is essential as the tree has restricted root growth. The root ball must never be allowed to dry out — adequate moisture is especially important when the fruits are swelling in early summer. Watering can be reduced as harvesting approaches.

In late summer it is usually necessary to hang a net over the tree to protect the ripening fruit from birds.

Feeding & Mulching

Do not overfeed. Apply a light dressing of Growmore in spring and spread an organic mulch over the soil surface. When the fruits start to swell apply a high-potash liquid fertilizer.

Picking & Storage

A Fig is ready for harvest when the stalk weakens and the fully-coloured fruit hangs downwards. There will be other tell-tale signs — the skin may be cracked or there may be a drop of nectar at the base. Gather the fruit carefully — it will keep in a cool place for several weeks. Figs can be dried in the airing cupboard. Turn daily — drying will take 4-7 days.

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