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handsomer. It grows well from cuttings. No necessity for small plants to have roots, as they will grow without. Height, ten to fifteen feet. Seedlings change very much in character from the parent plant.

Ficus carica

Common Fig

A native of the Mediterranean region, *Ficus carica* or common fig is a large deciduous shrub or small tree reaching a height of fifteen to twenty feet. The fig is characterized by a broad, spreading form with multiple stems and deeply lobed leaves that are rough on the top and pubescent below. *Ficus carica* produces pear-shaped fruit both in late spring and in summer. The fruit ranges in color from green to shades of brown or maroon and can be eaten fresh, cooked, or dried. The fig is a long-lived plant, and although often killed to the ground during cold winters, its roots survive.



Ficus carica (common fig)

The Greeks and Romans were great cultivators of figs, and legend has it that the Athenians were so fond of the fruit that they forbade their exportation to other countries. According to tradition, the first fig tree was introduced into England in 1525. The earliest account of figs being grown in North America is found in the colonial records of Spanish Florida, which indicate that on April 2, 1579, Pedro Menendez, upon visiting Saint Augustine, observed, "There are beginning to be many fruits of Spain such as figs, pomegranates, oranges and grapes in great quantity." Figs were reported to have been grown in Virginia as early as 1621, when John Smith noted that figs "prospered exceedingly" after being introduced into Jamestown from Bermuda. Thomas Jefferson was an avid grower of figs often recording their dates

of harvest along with information on his favorite varieties.

Figs were first offered for sale by an American nursery when listed in William Prince's 1771 *Broadside*. By the early part of the nineteenth century, figs had become a popular garden fruit, and in 1833 William Kenrick, author of *The New American Orchardist*, described over twenty varieties of figs suitable for American gardens. Because of their somewhat tender nature, figs were generally grown close to a house or outbuilding for winter protection. Figs planted during the antebellum period often have survived in the gardens and grounds of the lower and middle South.

***The American Cotton Planter*, 1854**

N. B. Cloud, Editor

~*~ The Fig

The fig (*Ficus carica*) should be generally cultivated throughout the Southern or Planting States, on account of its healthy and magnificent dessert fruit. . . . The few

isolated varieties now in cultivation with Americanized names, induces me to furnish you with a correct description of a few of the rarest and most approved varieties of the fig. . . . Apropos—the Fig Tree delights in a light, rich soil, which is supplied with water within the reach of the roots. Its nature is to produce two crops in the year. The first crop, which is produced on the points of the shoots of last year; the second crop is produced on the shoots of the current year. Among the best varieties grown are the following: Brown Ischia . . . Black Genoa . . . Early White . . . Genoa, Large White . . . Black Ischia . . . Malta . . . Murray or Brown Naples . . . Blue or Purple . . . Naples, Large Black . . . Italian, Brown Naples, Brown Turkey, Brown Italian . . . Green Ischia . . . Brunswick, Hanover or Madonna . . . Marseilles, White Marseilles . . . Gentile . . . Lee's Perpetual . . . Ischia Small Brown . . . Ischia Yellow, Cyprus . . . Nerii . . . Pregussata . . . Small Brown Ischia.

The Magazine of Horticulture, 1855

C. M. Hovey, Editor

↪ Figs—This is the fruit of the South which we are certain of having one crop per annum; and if the spring is mild, the first crop matures in June, the second a reliable crop in August and September; as an extra hit of fructification they bear a third crop, but like the first, seldom mature, being cut off by early frost.

Andrew Gray, Savannah, Georgia

The Farmer and Planter, 1860

William Sumner, Editor

↪ THE FIG AT THE SOUTH—Of all the fruits cultivated in the South, the fig requires the least care, and is one of the most productive and useful. South of the latitude of 32 degrees, the fig tree produces three crops a year, commencing in May and bearing until November, but in central Georgia we generally gather but two crops a year, unless the season is peculiarly favorable, the first or early crop being often killed by spring frosts. The figs are mostly eaten directly from the tree, as soon as ripe, and may be found in abundance upon the breakfast table of all lovers of fine fruit. The fig tree grows freely from cuttings planted early in the spring, and will sometimes bear the first year, generally the second. It has been a source of surprise to us that the fig is not extensively cultivated and turned to more profitable account; but this is not the only instance in which the prodigal and generous gifts of nature are lavished upon men in vain.

Firmiana simplex*(Sterculea platanifolia)*

Chinese Parasol Tree, Varnish Tree, Maple Leaved Sterculia

Firmiana simplex, previously known as *Sterculea platanifolia*, was named in honor of Karl Joseph von Firmiana (1718–1782), an early governor of Lombardy, Italy. Native to China and widely grown in Japan, it is a fast growing deciduous tree with a tall erect trunk and smooth, gray green bark. *Firmiana simplex* is commonly known as Chinese parasol tree because of its large palmate leaves (measuring ten to twelve inches across) and rounded, umbrellalike canopy. Small petal-like flowers develop in spring, followed in late summer by decorative seed pods that usually contain only two or three seeds.

Introduced into England in 1757, Chinese parasol tree was originally grown as a greenhouse plant but later was found to be hardy out-of-doors in protected locations. André Michaux, the French botanist who established a botanical garden in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1787, introduced this Asian native to North America sometime before the end of the eighteenth century. François Michaux, upon visiting his father's nursery garden outside Charleston, noted in 1802 in his *Travels* of finding "a good number of trees belonging to the old continent, that my father had planted, some of which were in the most flourishing state . . . including several *Sterculia platanifolia*, which had yielded seed upward of six years."



Firmiana simplex (Chinese parasol tree)

Chinese parasol tree was first offered to American gardeners when listed in Bernard M'Mahon's 1804 *Catalogue of Garden, Herb, Flower, Tree, Shrub, and Grass Seeds*. Grown as a prized exotic throughout the antebellum period, this somewhat invasive plant often escaped cultivation and has become naturalized in many areas of the lower and middle South.

***The American Cotton Planter*, 1855**

N. B. Cloud, Editor

↗ [From the *Natchez Daily Courier*, October 28, 1854]

The Varnish Tree (*Sterculia platyfolia*) is so called from its beautiful glossy bark, and large rich colored leaves, which seem all to have been recently coated with green varnish. It is, altogether, a pretty and desirable ornamental shade tree.

Thomas Affleck

***The Southern Cultivator*, 1857**

Daniel Lee and Dennis Redmond, Editors

↗ Ornamental Trees and Shrubs for the South

Sterculia platanifolia, (Varnish Tree) from China.—Perhaps one of our best shade trees in the South. Grows very rapidly, with a straight stem and sleek green bark forms a symmetrical head with very large leaves. It has a tremendous tap-root, and will, therefore, not, like the China Tree,

get blown out of the ground. It never gives suckers, and no insect ever troubles it. Thirty feet high. Propagated by seed.

Robert Nelson, Fruitland Nurseries, Augusta, Georgia

Forsythia viridissima

Greenstem Forsythia, Golden Bell, Deep-green Forsythia

Native to China, greenstem forsythia was named in honor of William Forsyth (1737–1804), an eighteenth-century Scottish gardener, writer, and successor of Philip Miller, the first director of the Chelsea Physic Garden. Greenstem forsythia is an upright, compact deciduous shrub with arching, olive green branches. One of its most striking features is its early springtime flowers, which are bright yellow and pendulous in nature. It also produces attractive purplish red foliage in autumn.

