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Fig Fact Sheet

- **Family:** Moraceae (mulberry)
- **Genus:** Ficus
- **Commercially important species:**
 - Ficus carica subgenus Eusyce (only member of genus cultivated for fruit)
- **Description:** deciduous tree; subtropical; soft, pithy wood; bark is generally smooth and free of fissures, however 'burrknots' often occur on lower trunk and roots, nodal swellings form under and on both sides of leaf scars; leaves are large, petiolate, 3-7 lobed to almost entire (leaves aid in cultivar identification); bears morphologically unusual fruit called 'syconium' which is almost entirely vegetative peduncular tissue (true fruits are tiny pedicellate drupelets within); Gynodioecious with two distinct forms: monoecious nonedible capri fig which serves as a pollinizer, and a pistillate edible fig; pollination achieved by fig wasp (*Blastophaga psenes* L.), which colonizes the syconium of the capri fig in a symbiotic relation; lateral bearing; 5-year generation time.
- **Origin:** Southern Arabia (native to semi-desert regions).
- **History of cultivation:** Millennia
- **Current major production area:** California ranks second after Turkey, and ahead of Spain, Greece and Portugal. Production from 1996 was 14,000 tons.
- **Site requirements:** Semi-desert. Cultivation limited by winter cold more than summer heat; low relative humidity (<25%); intense light; high summer temps. (32-37 C); moderate winters (temps. <-1 C are limiting); avoid late fall rains (damages fruit); spring winds interfere with wasp pollination and produce scarred fruit.

Cultivation in California

- **History:** Spread with Franciscan Missionaries. First figs planted in California in 1769 in the gardens on the mission at San Diego. In the 1850s, American settlers imported a wide variety of figs from the east coast and Europe which led to the first established orchards. By 1867 there were over 1000 acres (400 ha.) in the Sacramento Valley.
- **Present acreage:** (CA) 1943: 34,449 acres; 1978: 15,910 acres; 1995: 16,187 acres.
- **Farmgate value:** 1995: \$15 million
- **Yield:** varies with cultivar from 1.25-3.7 t/ha (industry average)

- **Cultivars:** Smyrna (Calimyrna, only prominent Smyrna type); Common: Kadota, Mission, Conadria, White Adriatic.
- **Rootstocks:** None in use; all varieties own-rooted.
- **Propagation:** Young figs are grown from rooted cuttings.
- **Spacing:** 30-40 ft. on the square (old spacing: Mission orchards). 20-22 ft. square for newer varieties. 15-30 ft. hedgerows.
- **Irrigation:** On level ground: flooding and furrow are used; on level areas, sprinklers and drippers are used.
- **Training System:** modified open-center system.
- **Nutrition:** Nitrogen is the only nutrient applied regularly (2.2-2.5% of the dry leaf weight); 20-40 lbs/acre nitrogen is an average application rate. Other nutritional deficiencies are rare. Figs are more likely to suffer toxicities from sodium, boron, or chloride.
- **Harvesting:** Edible fig cultivation may produce 1 to 2 crops per year. A small amount of figs are marketed fresh, these are hand picked. Most figs are harvested as a dried crop. These are allowed to dry on the tree and fall to the ground. Dried figs are mechanically swept into windrows and collected. Harvests are repeated at 2-3 week intervals, fumigated, and sun dried or dehydrated to 17% moisture or less.
- **Marketing:** The California Fig Marketing Order determines grade and quality. Marketing depends on the variety: Calimyrna are used for dried fruit or paste: Kadota and Adriatic are used primarily for paste; Mission figs are used for dried fruit, paste or juice of concentrate. California produces 100% of domestic dried figs.

Prepared by Steven Soby for Pomology 170A, 12/95 , updated 9/97

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