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Fig

Arabic: *tīna*
 Hebrew: *tena*
 Turkish: *incir*
 Persian: *injir*

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Plant and fruit, belonging to the mulberry family, or *Moraceae*. Figs are indigenous to the area stretching from [Anatolia](#) onwards to India. Still the plant is grown in most countries in the [Middle East](#) and [North Africa](#).

It is a deciduous tree, from 1 to 12 metres high with deeply lobed leaves that are rough above and smooth beneath. The branches of the tree are covered with downy, greenish bark.

The growth of the fruit comes from flowers that are borne inside a fleshy, hollow organ. As this organ grows, the fruit becomes the result. The ready fruit has a bulbous shape, with a small opening in the end. Inside, it is filled with red edible seeds. There are two kinds of fruits, one with male and female parts in one flower (called caprifigs) and one female. The wasps grow in the caprifig, and

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when the female wasps are about to lay their eggs, they search for immature caprifigs. Not being able to tell the difference between a female fruit and a caprifig, the female wasps enter female fruits, thereby pollinating them. The female wasp only lays eggs in caprifigs, making the edible fruits free from eggs and wasps. Caprifigs have three crops a year, while edible figs only have two.

It so happens that each type of fig only interacts with just one specific species of wasps. This is the reason why planting of figs in new regions often has proven difficult.

For the Middle East and North Africa there two main categories of figs in question. The popular commercially exploited one is known as *Ficus Carica*, the other one being the sycamore fig. The sycamore fig also has edible fruits, but of inferior quality to the Caric. But the sycamore is a beautiful tree and popular as a shade tree around Middle East and North Africa.

Figs are widely used, both fresh and dried or even dried and grinded.

Historically the fig tree is interesting being among the earliest fruit trees cultivated by man. The domestication of the fig tree goes back to pre-historic times.

The fig tree has been central to a few myths of Middle Eastern religions. In [Judaism](#) and [Christianity](#) a rotten fig tree has represented destruction. In [Islam](#) it has the status of being one of two trees with a sacred quality.



Fig producing countries

In metric tons (2002)

Algeria	61,000
Egypt	188,000
Iran	71,200
Iraq	13,000
Lebanon	16,500
Libya	4,000
Morocco	98,000
Syria	43,000
Tunisia	18,000
Turkey	250,000

Countries not on this list may still have production of figs, though LookLex has not been able to find any information on this.

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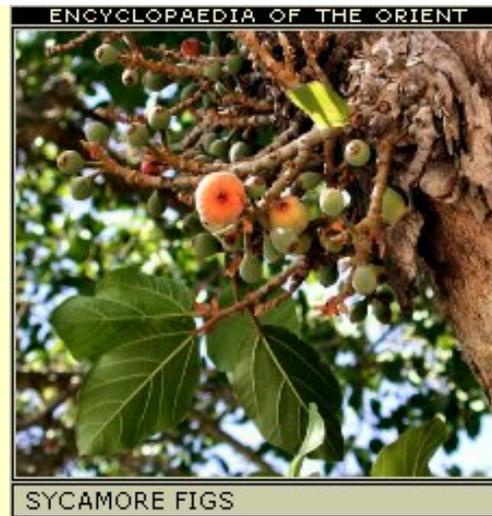


LEAF OF THE FICUS CARICA

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SYCAMORE FIG, TUNIS, TUNISIA



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