

BUCHANAN'S

NATIVE PLANTS

Growing Figs in Houston

According to Urban Harvest, "Figs are easy to grow, and one tree can usually produce enough for an entire family and many friends." Most fig varieties yield two distinct crops of fruit each year. The first crop is produced on the previous year's shoot growth, while the second crop is borne on the leaf axils of the current season's growth. Figs do not like standing water and they produce best in full sun. Fig trees lose their leaves in fall.

Planting

Assure quick establishment and long term health for your fig tree by using **Bushdoctor Kangaroots** when planting. Figs like to be **heavily mulched throughout the year**.

Fertilizing

Figs don't require frequent fertilization. After one year of growth, fertilize annually in the late winter with a balanced organic fertilizer such as **MicroLife 6-2-4**.

Harvesting

As figs grow in size on the tree, look for signs of color change. Then start to taste the figs to see if they are sweet. The time from color change to ripeness is very quick. Harvest early in the morning before the birds get the fruit.

Fig Tree Selections for the Houston Area

There are several standard fig varieties that have been grown in our area and remain reliable choices for home or limited commercial production. The characteristic of the fruit "eye" is a major consideration in adaptation. Varieties with an open eye may be susceptible to dried fruit beetle feeding or souring when rain enters the interior of the fruit.

Improved Celeste Improved Celeste produces good crops of very sweet, small to medium sized light violet to violet-brown fruit with reddish amber flesh. The main crop produces a large yield of delicious fruit. The tightly closed eye makes it resistant to spoiling and so it is a good choice for our climate. A small productive and hardy tree with fruit that ripens in late June and July.

Brown Turkey Also known as **Texas Everbearing**, is a larger fig than Celeste. It has a copper or bronze skin and an amber pulp. A small crop of large figs usually ripens about two weeks before Celeste, followed by the main crop of medium-size figs two to three weeks after Celeste. The small, moderately closed eye has a reddish color from a very early stage.

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LSU Gold, A large yellow fig with light red to pink pulp. Because the fruit has an open eye when mature, it should be picked as soon as it reaches maturity because fruit spoilage may occur during ripening in high moisture periods.

LSU Purple, A medium-size, long, turbinate, glossy reddish to dark purple fig that has light amber to light strawberry-colored pulp and a closed eye. A heavy main crop is produced in July followed by a later crop that often lasts into December. The mild flavor is good, and the fruit has high sugar content.

Alma, A medium to large pear-shaped to round fig with a light tan to brown skin and a light tan pulp. The eye is medium and self-sealing with drops of gum. The tree is highly productive with fruit ripening from late July through August. The fruit has few seed hulls and is very sweet.

Tiger, A new LSU fig, is sometimes known as Giant Celeste. It has a large brown fruit, yellow to gold pulp and a partially closed eye. Fruit ripens five to seven days after Celeste and continues over a 15-day period.

Petite Negra, A delicious juicy black skinned red-fleshed closed-eye fig that only grows to a maximum of 8' in full sun. This variety can be grown in a pot. An excellent non-commercial variety.

Italian Black, – Similar to Brown Turkey but with a very large fruit. The sweet flesh is amber-pink. This fig grows more like a large bush than a tree. A prolific bearer that sets 2 crops a year.

Italian Honey, A slow-growing small tree suitable for a container. One of the hardiest varieties with a green skin and sweet, amber flesh. This variety usually bears two crops a year.

Purple Passion, produces large to extra-large dark purple pear shaped to flattened fruit with an excellently flavored amber flesh and strawberry pulp. The eye is small making it somewhat resistant to spoiling. Purple Passion was found and introduced by Heidi Sheesley of Treesearch Farms in Houston, Texas.