

Q: How difficult is it to grow your own figs?

A: For thousands of years people have grown figs, (*Ficus carica*), cherishing the sweet rich flavor of this desert fruit. Edible figs are thought to have originated in western Asia. Fruit has been found in gravesites around the Mediterranean dating back 5000 years. Grown in California since 1769, we currently produce fig for the international market, coming in second only to Turkey. These relatively small trees with their large, palmate leaves originated in southern Arabia, in areas with limited winter cold, summer heat, few late spring rains and low humidity, and now are grown all round the world, wherever climate permits. The Italians and Portuguese say *figo*, the Spanish *higo* or *bravo*, the Germans *Feige*.

Healthy tree success is dependant on climate and water factors. The planting site needs to be protected from winter winds with a minimum of 8 hours of light. Figs need soil that drains, and do well on slopes. If you have sandy soils, check for nematode as figs are susceptible to infestation. The greatest limiting factor is cold weather. When the trees are fully dormant they can tolerate Ts as low as 12° - 15° F, (-11 to -9C), but once the trees have leafed out, or before losing their foliage in the fall, trees can be seriously damaged by temperatures in the 30F., (1C), range. Figs require about 300 chilling hours to set fruit, which is available throughout much of California. Figs usually grow wider than tall, and can grow to be 50', (15.4m). Slow-growing varieties can be grown in containers