

GROWING FIG TREES

This past week I visited Kenneth and Lucille Hubbard about a rust disease that invaded their Mayhaw trees. While helping identify the problem, I could not help but notice the largest fig tree in their backyard.

This fig tree was more like a shrub that stood atleast 15 feet tall and 25 feet wide. It dwarfs the size of my grandfather's fig tree I remember growing up.

Figs will grow in many types of soils as long as they are free from root-knot nematodes. The site needs to receive a minimum of eight hours of sunlight each day during the growing season. The trees from nurseries can be grown and sold in containers or sold bare-rooted. At home, figs can be propagated by stem cuttings from an older bush, rooted side shoots or rooting leafy cuttings under mist. The easiest method is by stem cuttings from an older bush.

If you are planting, include a preplant soil test. This can be done through the Thomas County Extension office to test the basic nutrients of the soil and pH. Remember, the pH needs to be determined to make sure that nutrients can be taken up by the plant. The best pH range for a fig tree is 5.5 – 6.5.

For good yield, figs need to be watered throughout the summer. As a rule of thumb, 1 to 1½ is adequate. If the lawn beneath the fig wilts in the heat while the rest of the lawn does not, the figs need water. Fertilize three times a year with a basic one to one ratio fertilizer if soil fertility is low. Figs will grow fine in moderately fertile soils with limited fertilizer. Mulching with organic material has proven to improve the trees.

As for harvesting, allow figs to ripen fully on the tree. They must be picked as they ripen; otherwise, spoilage from insects can occur. Souring is caused by yeasts spread by insects. Daily harvests and the removal of overripe, spoiled figs can greatly reduce spoilage problems. Souring cannot be controlled by sprays, but only varieties that have a closed eye.

A number of varieties of figs are available but only a few are well adapted for Georgia. Since we live in "good fig country," any variety can be grown south of the Fall Line. Here is a list of fig varieties:

Fig Varieties for Georgia				
Variety	Color of Fruit	Size	Quality of Fruit	
			For Fresh Use	For Preserving
Alma	Greenish brown	Small	Very good	Good
Brown Turkey	Bronze	Medium	Good	Excellent
Celeste	Lt. brown to violet	Small	Very good	Excellent
Green Ischia	Bright green	Medium	Good	Good (seeds objectionable)
Hunt	Dull bronze with white specks	Small to medium	Good	Excellent
Kadota	Bright greenish	Small to	Fair	Excellent

	yellow	medium		
LSU Purple	Reddish to dark purple	Medium	Good	?
Magnolia	Bronze with white flecks	Medium	Fair	Excellent

Information from this article was taken from “Home Fruit Production – Figs” and “Home Garden Figs” publications. For additional questions, please call Thomas County Extension office at 225-4130.

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/homefruit/fig/fig.html>

http://www.caes.uga.edu/Publications/pubDetail.cfm?pk_id=6802&pg=np&ct=figs&kt=&kid=&pid=