

Ficus - Growing Guide

Growing Ficus – Fig

Ficus is a vast genus of perhaps 800 species growing in tropical or subtropical regions. However, only a very few species can be grown outside in the British Isles although some others are popular as indoor or conservatory plants.

Ficus carica, the common fig, is the exception which every garden can grow even if not all trees in colder parts of the UK will actually produce edible fruits. It forms a deciduous tree with a trunk of 2-3ft in height and low spreading shrub-like growth. It is commonly grown against a wall where it will grow outwards to form a loose spreading tree unless pruned back hard and trained onto and across or along a wall and secured against wires or trellis. It can even be grown in an espalier shape with many trained shoots as you would a peach. Larger more mature trees which are allowed to spread can be pruned and trained over pergolas which creates something of a tunnel as at Ventnor Botanic Garden.



Ficus



Ficus carica



Ficus carica 'Celeste'



Ficus carica 'Celeste'



Ficus carica 'White Adriatic'



Ficus carica 'White Adriatic'

The plants which grow well in UK gardens are all females which have the power to produce fruit without being fertilised (like the cucumber). Pear shaped fruit receptacles develop into single fruits in profusion, especially after a hot dry summer. The fruits grow to up to 4in long and start off green maturing to dark green, purple or brown when finally ripe in September. Our plant at Burncoose has been pruned back hard against a wall but we do get some fruits most years although they are not always ripe enough to consider eating by early autumn after a wet summer.

In the Mediterranean areas figs are actually fertilised by the fig wasp which bores into the fruit to lay its eggs which then hatch as larvae and consume the fruit.

Even if you grow your fig as a shrub rather than a wall shrub it will still need a light pruning in spring to remove crossing branches and to improve its shape.

Ficus carica 'Brown Turkey', which we offer, is the best fruiting variety which can be grown in the UK.



Ficus 'Brown Turkey'



Ficus 'Brown Turkey'



Ficus 'Brown Turkey'



Ficus 'Brown Turkey'



Ficus 'Brown Turkey'

On occasion we also offer the more tender *Ficus pumila*. This is a self-clinging and vigorous climber which grows extensively along one of our walled garden walls facing east. It has become well established after decades and is evergreen. In very hot summers we find occasional small figs but you have to look closely to hunt these out in the dense foliage. When grown under glass from cuttings this plant romps away and would certainly fruit better with winter heat.



Ficus pumila



Ficus pumila



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Ficus pumila

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