PLANT FACT SHEET

Ficus carica L.

GENUS *Ficus* **FAMILY** Moraceae

COMMON NAMES Fig

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Flowers, Leaves - flavouring

Fruit are eaten raw or cooked.
They can be dried, preserved or used in jam. They are used in syrups, bread, pastries, and pies.
The fruit are made into brandy and wine.
Food is wrapped in the leaves while cooking to impart flavour. This is used with fish.
The latex is used to coagulate milk for cheese and junket.

DESCRIPTION

A fig. It is a low spreading deciduous tree with large leaves. It can grow to 10 m high. Trees are widely spreading with many branches. It has milky sap. The small branches are straight and strong. The leaves spread out like fingers on a hand with 3 or 5 lobes. The leaves are rough textured on the upper surface and downy underneath. The flowers are of one sex only. There are two sex forms - the caprifig and the fig. The caprifigs are dry and hard and develop 3 times a year. They harbour the fig wasp which itself goes through 3 different stages of its life cycle in these 3 fruit seasons. The "fruit" is a hollow receptacle with an opening at the tip. Inside this the flowers grow and mature. The true fruit develop inside this large receptacle. They are produced either singly or in pairs in the axils of leaves. Fruit colour can vary from black, brown, green and yellow. Wild figs have both male and female flower parts but cultivated figs have no male flower parts and the fruit develop without fertilisation for Adriatic figs but need a fig wasp for Smyrna figs. There are several hundred cultivated kinds of fig.

HABITAT

It suits tropical, subtropical and warm temperate regions. It is native to S.W. Asia. It can stand light frosts once hardened. Of the very large number of figs in PNG, this one is introduced. It suits highland areas in the tropics with a lower rainfall. It produces better if rain is less at flowering. Good summer heat is necessary for sugar-rich fruit. Plants do best in heavy soil in well prepared sites. It needs a neutral pH. It has some salt tolerance. In Brisbane Botanical Gardens. In Nepal it grows to about 1200 m altitude. In some places it can grow up to 2,300 m above sea level. It suits hardiness zones 10-12. In Sichuan. In Yunnan. National Arboretum Canberra.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown by seeds. It can be grown by stem cuttings. It can also be grown by budding and grafting. Smyrna figs need fig wasps for pollination. This is done by hanging male flowers near female flowers to attract the wasps. Adriatic figs develop fruit without pollination. Trees should be pruned for good production and easy harvesting.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Figs start to bear after about 5-7 years and can continue for decades but they become unprofitable after 50 years. Fruit ripen in their second year. Normally figs have 2 harvests per year. The first crop is from old wood and the second from newer wood.

NOTES

There are about 800-1000 Ficus species. They are mostly in the tropics. There are 120 Ficus species in tropical America. It has anticancer properties.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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