



OGDEN'S DESIGN & PLANTINGS, INC.

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FIGS

Design & Installation:

- Natural Gardens
- Japanese Gardens
- Bed Maintenance
- Therapeutic Gardens
- Paths & Patios
- Stone & Brickwork
- Specialty Gardens
- Seasonal Color & Interest

October To-Do List:

- Bring houseplants indoors
- Plant fall annuals
- Water evergreens thoroughly to prevent winter damage
- Dig and store tender summer bulbs
- Apply lime to lawns
- Plant or transplant deciduous trees and shrubs

Ogdenwords:

Lobe: the rounded parts of some leaves and petals which are divided, halfway or less to the center, not sufficiently to make separate leaflets.

Syconium: a fleshy, hollow receptacle with small opening at the apex partly closed by small scales, containing numerous flowers.

Apex: The tip or growing point of an organ such as a shoot.

Pollination: the transfer of male pollen to the female stigma, normally performed by insects. Flowers can also be hand-pollinated or wind-pollinated.

There is nothing as delicious as a freshly picked fig from your garden. Growing fig trees is easy to do and the plant is relatively pest and problem free. The fig tree, also known as *Ficus carica*, is native to the Middle East and can be found as far north as Hungary and Moravia. Currently there are thousands of cultivars, so care must be taken to select varieties that are hardy to Long Island.

Small by nature the fig tree is ideal for use in the shrubbery border. Depending on the cultivar, the fig shrub can grow 10 to 20 feet tall. Typically wider than tall, it has large, deeply lobed leaves. Figs grow best in full sun with a southern exposure, protected from wind. They prefer well-drained, light soil. Newly installed plants benefit from shredded bark mulch which will keep the roots cool and moist. As the fig plant matures, a very deep root system develops that allows the plant to survive seasonal droughts. Care must be taken not to over fertilize the plant. Figs are not heavy feeders and over fertilization results in lush leaf growth at the expense of fruit production. Ideally you should fertilize in spring, with a natural slow release fertilizer like Espoma Flowertone or Citrustone.



Two crops of figs can be produced in a year, although one is more typical on Long Island. The first crop develops in the spring on previous year's wood. Then a main, larger and more productive crop develops on the current year or new wood, which ripens in late summer or fall.

The part we like to eat is actually not a fruit, and does not develop from a flower. The fig fruit is a syconium, developing at the joint where the leaf meets the stem. Since the edible part does not develop from a flower, no pollination is necessary. Figs have eyes. The eyes are located at the opening at the apex of the fruit where the skin comes together. Closed eyes prevent

bacteria, fungi and insects from getting inside and causing souring. It is best to buy closed eye figs for this reason (and the ones that we listed below have closed eyes).

As plants mature and the root system develops, wrapping the plant for winter protection is not necessary. Branches may die back during extremely cold winters, preventing a spring crop. Upon careful inspection in early spring, you can prune the dead wood out. The roots protected by soil will push new branches from the ground, which will produce fruit in the fall.

Figs are either light skinned (green or yellow/green) or dark skinned (purple, black or brown). The color is determined by the variety. If you have problems with birds, you may want to choose green skinned varieties. For some reason the birds don't think the lighter skinned figs are ripe, and tend to leave them alone. Some dark skinned varieties will change color late and can be picked and eaten green.

Varieties ideal for Long Island include Brown Turkey, Celeste and Negronne. Brown turkey is an old time favorite that is hardy to ten degrees. It produces two crops of medium sized, purplish-brown fruit and is very dependable. Celeste is a very sweet, fast ripening, dark fleshed fig. Sometimes referred to as the Sugar Fig its tight eye resists rot. Negronne, also known as Violette de Bordeaux, is a very sweet, dark fleshed, almost black colored fig. The leaves are smaller, and the plant in general is more compact than others, which makes it a good container candidate.

At Ogden's we have beautiful, large potted figs to install in your home garden. Give us a call so we can help you to grow figs in your yard.