

Anyone Growing Figs?

by Al Chomica

There are quite a few old and new varieties of fig trees available these days and we grow and propagate three special kinds in our food forest. Figs are easy to grow and there are all sorts of stories floating around about them. Didn't the story of Adam and Eve involve a fig leaf? Have you ever heard that every cutting grown from a fig will revert into a female tree? Or how about the concept that when planting a tree, its roots should be confined or constricted to keep the tree in shape and tidy? The fig itself is not a fruit but rather an inverted flower that is designed to be pollinated by a fig wasp that apparently doesn't live this far north.

We have discovered that for maximum fig production our trees need to be trained into growing thick stubs that will grow shoots that are pruned back semi-annually. This is because figs usually only form on second year wood, just like raspberries, so cutting them back promotes new growth that will produce fruit in the following year. The following video pretty much sums up what to do with a fig tree in the pruning department: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RB0D_tuKgtQ

Our oldest tree is a Desert King Fig that is five years old. We eat several of these fresh, or in smoothies, every day but we also freeze them or make a wicked alcoholic jam called Drunken Fig Preserves. This tree grows huge figs that can weigh in at almost a quarter pound each! It has tasty green skin with white specks and bright red, sweet, juicy flesh. This is an awesome fig with nectar as sticky as honey.



Desert King

The Brown Turkey Fig is a curious variety that grows small and green until it is almost ripe then it puffs up and turns an unappealing brown colour. Inside though, it is very sweet and tasty with an unbelievable purple flesh. It is smaller than the Desert King and seems to ripen later so it is perfect.



Brown Turkey

Perhaps saving our personal favourite for the last is a fig that we have just identified as a Black Mission Fig. It is the most superior-tasting fig of them all with a flavourful nectar that just oozes from the fruit.



Black Mission



Brown Turkey on top, Desert King on the bottom

It is unbelievable that we can grow these and we never even knew they existed when we lived on the mainland...