Growing figs in Michigan

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Growing Figs in Michigan

- Why bother growing your own figs?
- Propagation Methods
- Favorite Varieties
- A year in the life of a northern grown fig
  - Fig Shuffle
  - Growing
  - Winter Storage
- What to do with all those figs?
- Notable people from around the world recognized for their work on Figs.
Growing Figs in Michigan

Why bother growing your own figs?

- It's fun. Duh!
- It brings people together.
- Many people enjoy knowing where their food comes from and take great pleasure in growing their own food.
- They taste better!!!! These are not Fig Newtons and they don't taste like "sweet dirt"
The best tasting fig you will ever taste will be one that is eaten right off the plant at its peak ripeness. “Fresh” figs sold in supermarkets don’t typically ship well and they don’t ripen any further once removed from the tree. They are often either bland or spoiled.
Propagation Methods

- Cutting
- Air Layers
- Seed
- Tissue Culture
Propagation Methods

- Cutting
  - The way most figs are produced and traded between fig collectors.
Removing and labelling branches from figs that are given away
Cuttings

- Taken off the stock plants when leaves have dropped in the fall.
- Cuttings are labelled and stored in Long fiber Sphagnum moss to be held for later planting.
- Cuttings can be stored in a refrigerator for 6-9 months.
- This is the main way figs are traded and shared between individuals.
Stored in plastic bins or Zip-lock
I like to use the highest grade moss for storage
Rooting in Moss
Rooted cutting leafing out.
Cutting rooting station
Propagation Methods

- Air Layers
  - Another great way to produce a new tree from an existing tree in the middle of the growing season.
  - I’ve also air layered whole tree trunks to improve the shape of the plant.
Air Layering

If set in May/June can be removed in July/August.
Nero 600 Air Layer using a soda bottle
Main Trunk Air Layer – July 2016
Set in August of 2015
Air Layer removed by using a saw just below the pot.
Air Layer ready to be planted into a 20” pot.
Propagation Methods

- Seed
  - Not recommended.
  - [https://crfg.org/wiki/fruit/fig/](https://crfg.org/wiki/fruit/fig/)

- The tiny flowers of the fig are out of sight, clustered inside the green “fruits”, technically a synconium. Pollinating insects gain access to the flowers through an opening at the apex of the synconium. In the case of the common fig the flowers are all female and need no pollination. There are 3 other types, the caprifig which has male and female flowers requiring visits by a tiny wasp, Blastophaga grossorum; the Smyrna fig, needing cross-pollination by caprifigs in order to develop normally; and the San Pedro fig which is intermediate, its first crop independent like the common fig, its second crop dependent on pollination.
Propagation Methods

- Tissue Culture

- Many online nurseries offer more common varieties.
- Some are Wholesale such as Agristarts.
- Some sell individual plants via Ebay. An example of this is Wellspring gardens or Baker Creek. Many of the smaller operations just buy and resell Agristarts plugs.
Growing Figs in Michigan

- **Favorite Varieties**
  - Over the past 5 years, I’ve grown and evaluated over 130 varieties with the desire to find the best tasting fig. When I’ve asked others what their favorites are, I could never get a straight answer. So I just began growing any that I could get my hands on.
  - Figs from the supermarket don’t usually taste as good as ones that are harvested directly from a local tree. For this reason, it’s best to grow your own, if you have the patience.
  - Each year I get rid of 20-30 varieties that don’t make the cut. My goal is to keep only 25. Problem is…. I seem to always add more than I discard. This is called “Fig Fever”
  - Here are photos of a few of my top Favorites.
Genovese Nero AF
Italian 258
GM 155
Maltese Beauty
Six day ripening of Maltese Beauty
Maltese Beauty 9-7-16

GM 155
Maltese Beauty
Antonelli Unk
White/Green Figs

Latarella
7-25-14
Breba

Dame Blanc
9-25-16
Some Varieties are highly prized
Black Beauty 10 Fig tree live fruiting plant VERY RARE variety

US $394.00 + US $17.00
Shipping
27 bids | Ended

Ponte Tresa Fig plant RARE Delicious

US $405.00
34 bids | 3d 1h

Shipping
May 28
Est. Delivery
Growing Figs in Michigan

- A year in the life of a northern grown fig
  - Fig Shuffle (April 1-May 15\textsuperscript{th})
  - Growing
    - [https://crfg.org/wiki/fruit/fig/](https://crfg.org/wiki/fruit/fig/)
- Winter Storage
Spring Time “Fig Shuffle”
Repotting

- Bark: Aged Pine bark is best.
- Compost
- Professional mixes
- Kroger Potting Soil
- Aged Manure
- Rice Hulls
Setting the pots in place.

- When do I bring them out of the Garage?
- April 15th – May 1
- As long as they are dormant.
At this stage, they are susceptible to a frost.
Winter Storage
Winter Storage in the Basement

- Dark and Cool is best
Another way to over-winter
Grower Related Challenges

- Fugus gnats while rooting cuttings
- Yellow Jackets and Wasps
- Splitting
- Birds
- Rust
- Fig Mosaic Virus
Fungus Gnats
Yellow Jackets and Wasps
Splitting
Bird Damage
Fig Mosaic Virus
Rust
What to do with all those Figs???
Fig Jam
Dried Figs
Ice Cream blends
Thinning the Herd
Tagging
Container Grown
Fig in a Tub
The Godfather of Figs

- adrianosfigtrees.com  He’s the “AF” in Genovese Nero AF

All grown in a northern climate, Adriano Ferreria has over thirty years of experience cultivating fig trees in Canada. He sells cuttings or plants. He will trade with any fig tree he doesn't have. Adriano has over two hundred varieties of fig trees, one of the largest private collections in the world. Due to export regulations and inquiries, Adriano will only sell to customers in Canada and due to the volume of inquiries will only provide advice and information on the cultivation of fig trees to those customers.
In the heart of the Marina of Llucmajor (Mallorca), the estate of Son Mut Nou. Rough earth, and clay. Dry land where rain is a rare and rare good. Land of low mountain, of steppes and gamones, of woods and acebuches, with some scant pine that perfumes the plain. Wild land, with stalks stolen from the forest, with sweat and fatigue, for cultivation. Land of few trees, where the cultivated fig tree knows how to take advantage of the scarcity, knows how to survive because it adapts prodigiously to a medium that is, for reasons of remote, familiar origin. Earth where the fig tree, generous, extracts from the droughts and the clay the delight of its most delicious fruits ...

This is the telltale framework in which Montserrat Pons and Boscana, Llucmajor's pharmacist in love with the biblical tree and the microcosm that history and life have built around the fig trees, has embarked on a unique experience in the world ... 

Montserrat, spurred by unusual behavior, has designed and developed, from the fig tree shoots of Miner, provided by his friend Pep Sacarés and Mulet, the project, today a very real reality, of constructing an experimental field of fig tree cultivation in order to contribute to the study and scientific knowledge of the tree and its fruit, the safeguarding of the heritage, the maintenance of our plant genetic resources, the promotion of traditional and popular culture, in search of the potential exploitation of the figs ... A work, ultimately aimed at promoting science, humanism, ecology and economics, with an altruistic and almost visionary dedication of the fig trees and figs.
Figs are very popular in Malaysia
Belleclare Nursery

http://www.marthastewart.com/907952/fabulous-figs

Chris and Bill Dipaolollo pictured with Herman from F4F.

Steven Biggs

Grow Figs
Where You Think You Can’t.

http://www.grow-figs.com/the-book-grow-figs/

https://youtu.be/4mpqNgnDUas

Probably one of the best videos on the web dedicated to growing figs in cold regions.
The Correia family is a third generation California farm family specializing mainly in Chestnuts. They began growing figs for their own home use beginning about 15 years ago and in 2012 began greatly expanding their collection to evaluate the many varieties they had heard so much about. By the summer of 2015 they had grown to approximately 300 varieties.
Pierre Baud

http://www.fig-baud.com/choixfiguier.html

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cseW0zyJKOw

In case you can speak French.
Bass Salaam – Trees of Joy

http://www.treesofjoy.com/

Trees of Joy is located in a suburb of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, cold hardiness zone 6. They’re experimenting with growing all types of edible landscaping in their garden. For the past 11 years they’ve evaluated different care-free fruit trees that are uncommon for the area. They currently grow a few types of Pomegranates that proved to be hardy in zone 6, as well as Prickly pear Cactus, Oriental Persimmon, Jujube, Pawpaw, and a large collection of figs. Their primary purpose is to find the best suitable varieties for their climate. They mainly sell Fig trees and occasionally different grafted fruit trees when available, such as Jujube, Pawpaw, Persimmon, kiwis. They also carry the rare Cedar of Lebanon trees.
Bill Muzychko

Owner of Bill’s Figs
329 Old York Road
Flemington, New Jersey 08822
wmuzy@comcast.net
Probably the best source for information on growing figs on the internet. Jon as the owner of Encanto Farms and is the moderator of Figs4Fun. He is said to have over 800 varieties of figs.
Thank You

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