

Grow Your Own: A Beginner's Guide to Rooting Figs

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THE ORIGINAL FIG VARIETY DATABASE

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Fig Propagation

Propagating figs from cuttings is a rewarding and cost-effective way to grow your own fig trees. Whether you're an experienced gardener or a beginner, fig propagation is a great way to learn about plant propagation and produce delicious fruit. This chapter will introduce you to the benefits of fig propagation, as well as the anatomy and growth habits of fig trees.

One of the primary benefits of propagating figs from cuttings is that it allows you to grow a large number of trees from a single parent tree. This can be especially helpful if you have limited space, as you can grow several trees in containers or a small area of your yard. Additionally, propagating your own figs from cuttings can be much more cost-effective than purchasing mature trees from a nursery.

Before diving into the specifics of fig propagation, it's important to have a basic understanding of fig anatomy and growth habits. Fig trees are deciduous, meaning they lose their leaves each year, and are typically grown as multi-stemmed shrubs or small trees. The fruit of the fig tree is actually an inverted flower, with the fleshy, sweet interior containing the tree's seeds. Fig trees are also unique in that they are pollinated by a specific type of wasp, but don't worry - the figs you grow from cuttings won't require pollination to produce fruit.

When it comes to fig propagation, there are a few basic principles to keep in mind. First, it's important to choose the right type of cutting - one that is mature enough to contain the necessary hormones for rooting, but not so old that it has lost its ability to root. Second, timing is key - you'll want to take cuttings at the right time of year and use them as quickly as possible to maximize your success rate. And finally, proper preparation of the cuttings is critical for successful rooting.

By understanding the basics of fig propagation, you'll be well-equipped to start growing your own fig trees from cuttings. The rest of this book will provide you with step-by-step instructions and helpful tips for each stage of the propagation process, from choosing and preparing cuttings to planting and caring for your newly rooted fig trees.



Chapter 2: Choosing Fig Cuttings

Choosing the right fig cuttings is a crucial step in successful propagation. In this chapter, we'll explore the types of fig cuttings available, when to take cuttings, and the tools and supplies you'll need for the process.

There are two main types of fig cuttings: hardwood and softwood. Hardwood cuttings are taken from mature, dormant branches in the winter, while softwood cuttings are taken from new growth in the spring and summer. Both types of cuttings can be used for propagation, but hardwood cuttings may be more challenging to root, depending on your location.

When selecting fig cuttings, it's important to choose healthy, disease-free branches. Look for branches that are approximately pencil-thick in diameter and at least 6 inches long. Avoid branches that are too thin or too thick, as they may not contain the right balance of hormones for rooting. Yes, some people are successful with many types of wood but for the most part, stick to this option.



The best time to take fig cuttings will depend on the type of cutting you're using. Hardwood cuttings should be taken in late winter, after the tree has gone dormant for the season. Softwood cuttings can be taken in late spring or early summer, when the tree is actively growing.

To take cuttings, you'll need a sharp, clean pair of [pruning shears](#) or a pruning saw. It's important to sterilize your tools (alcohol and paper towel works well) before use to prevent the spread of disease. You'll also need a container of clean water or a [rooting hormone](#), as well as a potting mix or other rooting medium.

When preparing your cuttings, remove any leaves or side shoots from the bottom of the cutting, leaving only the top leaves (optional) intact. If using a rooting hormone, dip the bottom of the cutting into the hormone powder or liquid. Place the cutting into the rooting medium, making sure the bottom of the cutting is buried about 2-3 inches deep.

In summary, choosing the right fig cuttings is critical for successful propagation. Look for healthy, disease-free branches that are the right size and type for the season. Use clean, sterilized tools and prepare your cuttings carefully, using a rooting hormone if desired. Remember to keep your rooting cuttings away from direct sunlight. With the right tools and techniques, you'll be on your way to growing your own fig trees from cuttings.



Chapter 3: Rooting Fig Cuttings

Rooting fig cuttings is a delicate process that requires patience and attention to detail. In this chapter, we'll cover the steps you need to take to root your fig cuttings successfully.

Once you've chosen your cuttings and prepared them for rooting, the next step is to create the right conditions for rooting to occur. Fig cuttings need high humidity, warmth, and a well-draining rooting medium to encourage root growth.

To create high humidity, you can cover your cuttings with a clear plastic bag or place them in a humidity dome, some people even use a storage container. This will help prevent the cuttings from drying out and encourage them to retain moisture. You can also mist the cuttings regularly to help maintain humidity.

Keeping the cuttings warm is also important for successful rooting. Ideally, you'll want to keep your cuttings in an area that is consistently between 70-80°F. If you don't have a warm area available, you can use a [heat mat](#) or place your cuttings on top of a warm appliance, like a refrigerator or water heater.

A well-draining rooting medium is also essential for successful root growth. You can use a commercial potting mix or create your own mix using perlite, vermiculite, and peat moss. Make sure the rooting medium is moist but not waterlogged, as excess water can lead to rotting.

It's important to monitor your cuttings regularly for signs of root growth. Once your cuttings have developed roots that are at least an inch long or you can see them through the clear cup, they're ready to be transplanted into their permanent container or outdoor location.



Chapter 4: Caring for Rooted Fig Cuttings

Once your fig cuttings have rooted, it's important to care for them properly to ensure they continue to grow and thrive. In this chapter, we'll explore the steps you need to take to care for your rooted fig cuttings.

One of the first things you'll need to do is transplant your rooted cuttings into a larger container or outdoor location. Choose a container or outdoor location that provides enough space for the roots to grow and has good drainage. Fill the container with a well-draining potting mix or soil, and plant the cutting so that the roots are covered and the top leaves are above the soil line.

Water your newly planted fig cuttings regularly, making sure to keep the soil moist but not waterlogged. You may need to water more frequently during hot weather or if your container doesn't have good drainage. Fertilize your fig trees once a month during the growing season with a balanced fertilizer to encourage healthy growth.

As your fig trees grow, you may need to prune them to maintain their shape and size. Pruning also encourages the growth of new fruit-bearing branches. It's important to prune your fig trees during the winter when they are dormant to avoid damaging the tree or interfering with fruit production.



In addition to pruning, you'll also need to protect your fig trees from pests and diseases. Keep an eye out for common pests like spider mites, mealybugs, and scale insects. You can use a natural insecticide or an insecticidal soap to control pests. To prevent diseases, avoid overwatering your trees and ensure they have good air circulation.

Finally, make sure your fig trees receive enough sunlight. They need at least six hours of direct sunlight each day to produce fruit. If you live in South Florida like me, you definitely don't want full sun for more than 6 hours on hot summer days. If you're growing your fig trees indoors, place them in a sunny window or under grow lights.

In summary, caring for your rooted fig cuttings involves transplanting them into a larger container or outdoor location, watering and fertilizing them regularly, pruning them to maintain their shape and size, protecting them from pests and diseases, and ensuring they receive enough sunlight. With proper care and attention, your fig trees will continue to grow and produce delicious fruit for years to come.



Chapter 5: Common Problems When Rooting Fig Cuttings

Rooting fig cuttings can be a rewarding experience, but it's not always a straightforward process. In this chapter, we'll discuss some common problems that can arise when rooting fig cuttings and how to troubleshoot them.

One common issue when rooting fig cuttings is rotting. This can occur when the cuttings are too moist or exposed to too much water. To prevent rotting, make sure your rooting medium is well-draining and only water your cuttings when the soil feels dry to the touch. If you notice any signs of rotting, like brown or black spots on the cutting, remove it immediately to prevent the rot from spreading.

Another issue is drying out. Fig cuttings need a high humidity environment to encourage root growth, so if they're not kept moist, they may dry out and fail to root. To prevent drying out, cover your cuttings with a clear plastic bag or place them in a humidity dome. You can also mist the cuttings regularly to help maintain humidity.

Lack of root growth is another problem that can occur when rooting fig cuttings. If you've followed the proper steps for rooting your cuttings but still don't see any root growth after a few weeks, you may need to be patient and wait a bit longer. Alternatively, you can try using a rooting hormone to encourage root growth.

Finally, pests and diseases can also be a problem when rooting fig cuttings. Common pests include spider mites, mealybugs, and scale insects. To control pests, you can use a natural insecticide or an insecticidal soap. Diseases like root rot and powdery mildew can also affect your fig cuttings. To prevent disease, avoid overwatering your cuttings and ensure they have good air circulation.

In conclusion, rooting fig cuttings can be a challenging process, but with proper care and attention, you can overcome common problems like rotting, drying out, lack of root growth, and pests and diseases. Remember to be patient and monitor your cuttings regularly for any signs of issues. With perseverance, you'll be able to successfully root your fig cuttings and enjoy the rewards of growing your own fig trees.

Chapter 6: Using Rooted Fig Cuttings to Grow Fig Trees

Once your fig cuttings have successfully rooted and grown into healthy plants, you can use them to grow fig trees. In this chapter, we'll explore the steps you need to take to use your rooted fig cuttings to grow fig trees.

The first step is to transplant your rooted fig cuttings into a larger container or outdoor location where they will have room to grow. Fig trees prefer well-draining soil and full sun, so choose a location that meets these requirements. If you're transplanting your cuttings to an outdoor location, make sure to acclimate them gradually to prevent shock.

As your fig trees grow, you may need to prune them to maintain their shape and size. Pruning also encourages the growth of new fruit-bearing branches. It's important to prune your fig trees during the winter when they are dormant to avoid damaging the tree or interfering with fruit production.

Fertilize your fig trees once a month during the growing season with a balanced fertilizer to encourage healthy growth. Fig trees also require regular watering, particularly during the hot summer months.



Once your fig trees have matured, they will begin to produce fruit. Some varieties of fig trees produce two crops each year, a small early crop (breba) in the summer and a larger main crop in the fall. However, I and other South Floridian friends of mine have noted some varieties

producing up to 4 times a year. To ensure a bountiful harvest, it's important to properly care for your fig trees throughout the year.

When your figs are ripe, you can harvest them by gently twisting them off the tree. *Figs don't ripen off the tree*, so it's important to pick them at the right time. Ripe figs should be soft to the touch and have a sweet, fragrant aroma.

In summary, using your rooted fig cuttings to grow fig trees involves transplanting them to a larger container or outdoor location, pruning and caring for the trees as they grow, fertilizing and watering them regularly, and harvesting the ripe fruit. With proper care and attention, your fig trees will provide you with delicious fruit for years to come.



Chapter 7: Conclusion and Final Thoughts

Rooting fig cuttings can be a rewarding and satisfying experience, but it can also be challenging at times. In this book, I've covered the basics of rooting fig cuttings, from selecting the right cuttings to caring for them as they grow into healthy plants.

We've discussed the different types of fig trees, the best time to take cuttings, and the various methods of rooting cuttings. We've also explored the importance of using the right soil mix, providing adequate moisture and humidity, and controlling pests and diseases.

We've covered the steps you need to take to use your rooted fig cuttings to grow fig trees, including transplanting, pruning, fertilizing, and harvesting. By following these steps and providing proper care, you can enjoy the sweet and succulent fruit that fig trees produce.

But beyond the practical aspects of rooting fig cuttings, there is also a sense of wonder and appreciation for the natural world that can come with this process. Rooting fig cuttings is a reminder of the beauty and complexity of the natural world, and it provides a sense of connection to the earth that is often missing in our modern lives.

In addition to the rewards of growing fig trees, rooting cuttings can also be a satisfying and relaxing hobby. It's a way to slow down and connect with nature, to take a break from the stresses of daily life and immerse yourself in the simple pleasures of gardening.



Chapter 8: Additional Resources for Rooting Fig Cuttings

While this book has covered the basics of rooting fig cuttings, there is always more to learn. In this chapter, we'll provide you with some additional resources for further exploration of the fascinating world of fig trees. You can find many links to great resources and websites [here](#).

1. Online Forums and Groups

One of the best resources for fig enthusiasts is online forums and groups. These forums provide a platform for gardeners and fig enthusiasts to share their experiences, ask questions, and learn from one another. [OurFigs](#) forum is a great place to start, with a wealth of information and a friendly community of members.

2. Books and Publications

There are many books and publications available on the subject of fig trees and gardening. Some of the most highly recommended include "[The Fig: Its History, Culture, and Curing](#)" by Gustavus A. Eisen. I have provided many more books and PDF files available [here](#) under "recommended books".

3. Local Gardening Groups and Clubs

Joining a local gardening group or club can be a great way to connect with other gardeners and learn more about fig trees and other plants. These groups often host workshops, meetings, and events that can help you expand your knowledge and connect with others who share your passion for gardening. I have found some facebook groups to be a great source not only for information but to make new friends as well. However, keep your eyes open and join only those "good groups". I have created a small list of those good groups [here](#) under "Facebook groups".

4. Nurseries From Well Known Members Of The Fig Community

Visiting your local nursery or garden center is a great way to get hands-on experience with fig trees and other plants. You can talk to knowledgeable staff members, see different varieties of

fig trees, and get advice on planting, pruning, and caring for your plants. Again, I created a very small list of trusted places I know of [here](#) under “Where to buy cuttings & plants”.

5. Online Retailers - Most Also Have Nurseries

There are several online retailers that specialize in fig trees and related products. These retailers offer a wide variety of fig tree varieties. Some even offer fig products like jellies, spices, balsamic vinegars and much more.

In summary, there are many resources available for those interested in rooting fig cuttings and growing fig trees. Online forums and groups, books and publications, local gardening groups and clubs, nursery and garden centers, and online retailers are just a few of the resources that can help you expand your knowledge and connect with other fig enthusiasts. With the help of these resources, you can continue to learn and grow in your love for fig trees and the art of gardening.

Avoid any and all Auction sites (unless you want to pay ridiculous prices). And avoid people who self proclaim to have found thousands of new varieties (yep, those are out there too).



Chapter 9: Frequently Asked Questions About Rooting Fig Cuttings

1. When is the best time to take fig cuttings?

The best time to take fig cuttings for the most part is during the dormant season, which is typically in late winter or early spring. This is when the fig tree is not actively growing and the branches are easier to handle. For me in South Florida, I can do so at almost anytime of the year.

2. What is the best way to root fig cuttings?

There are several methods for rooting fig cuttings, including air layering, rooting in water, and rooting in soil. The most common and successful method is rooting in soil. This involves dipping the cut end of the cutting in rooting hormone and planting it in a well-draining soil mix.

3. How long does it take for fig cuttings to root?

Fig cuttings can take anywhere from 4-8 weeks to root, depending on the variety of fig tree and the conditions in which they are being rooted. Patience is key when rooting fig cuttings, as they can take some time to establish roots and begin to grow.

4. How do I care for my newly rooted fig cuttings?

Newly rooted fig cuttings require regular watering and should be kept in a warm and humid environment. It is important to protect them from direct sunlight and to monitor them for pests and diseases. As they grow, they can be gradually acclimated to more light and less humidity.

5. Can I plant my rooted fig cuttings outdoors?

Once your rooted fig cuttings have established a strong root system and are growing well, they can be transplanted outdoors into a well-draining soil and a sunny location. It is important to

protect them from harsh winds and to continue to provide them with regular watering and fertilization.

6. How do I fertilize my fig trees?

Fertilizing fig trees should be done in the spring, as they begin to grow new leaves and shoots. Use a balanced fertilizer, such as a 10-10-10 or 16-16-16 blend, and follow the manufacturer's instructions for application. Avoid over-fertilizing, as this can lead to excessive growth and reduced fruit production.

7. How do I prune my fig trees?

Pruning fig trees should be done in the dormant season, typically in late winter or early spring. Remove any dead or diseased branches, and trim back any branches that are crossing or rubbing against one another. Fig trees do not require extensive pruning, and it is important not to remove too much of the tree's canopy, as this can reduce fruit production.

8. How do I harvest my figs?

Figs should be harvested when they are fully ripe and have a soft texture. They can be gently picked from the tree, or cut off with a pair of scissors. Be sure to handle them gently, as they can bruise easily. Figs can be eaten fresh, dried, or used in a variety of recipes.



Chapter 10: Troubleshooting Common Problems When Rooting Fig Cuttings

While rooting fig cuttings can be a relatively straightforward process, there are a few common problems that can arise along the way. Here are some tips for troubleshooting these issues and ensuring the success of your fig cuttings.

1. Cuttings aren't rooting

If your fig cuttings are not rooting, there could be a few possible causes. First, make sure that you are using a well-draining soil mix and that the cut end of the cutting is dipped in rooting hormone before planting. Additionally, ensure that the cuttings are being kept in a warm and humid environment and that they are not receiving too much or too little light. If your cuttings are still not rooting after several weeks, it may be necessary to take new cuttings from a different part of the tree.

2. Mold or fungus growth

Mold or fungus growth on your fig cuttings can be a sign of over-watering or poor air circulation. To prevent mold or fungus from developing, ensure that your cuttings are planted in a well-draining soil mix and that they are not sitting in standing water. Additionally, provide adequate ventilation to the area where your cuttings are being kept.

3. Yellowing or dropping leaves

Yellowing or dropping leaves on your fig cuttings can be a sign of over or under-watering, nutrient deficiencies, or pests. To remedy this issue, adjust your watering schedule as needed, ensure that your soil mix is nutrient-rich, and inspect your cuttings for pests such as spider mites or aphids.

4. Root rot

Root rot can occur when cuttings are over-watered or planted in soil that does not provide adequate drainage. If you suspect that your cuttings have root rot, carefully remove them from

the soil and examine the roots for signs of decay. If the roots are brown or mushy, trim away any affected areas and replant the cutting in fresh soil.

5. Slow growth or stunted growth

Slow or stunted growth on your fig cuttings can be a sign of inadequate light, or nutrient deficiencies. To address this issue, ensure that your cuttings are receiving adequate sunlight or artificial light, and fertilize them with a balanced fertilizer according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Here's a list of materials that are necessary for rooting fig cuttings:

1. [Pruning shears](#) or a sharp knife: You'll need a tool to make clean, precise cuts on the fig tree branches.
2. [Rooting hormone](#): This powder or liquid solution is used to encourage the growth of new roots from the cut end of the fig cutting.
3. A container: You'll need a container to hold your soil mix and your fig cuttings. This could be a small pot, a plastic container, or even a plastic bag.
4. Well-draining soil mix (preferred medium): Fig cuttings require a soil mix that is well-draining and nutrient-rich. You can make your own soil mix by combining your choice of the following trialed mixes:
 - [Perlite](#), [vermiculite](#), and peat moss in equal parts.
 - [Coco coir](#) and [rice hulls](#) or coco coir and perlite (my favorite methods) both methods I use about 75% by 25%.
 - 60% peat and 40% perlite
5. Water: You'll need to water your fig cuttings regularly to keep the soil moist but not waterlogged.
6. Plastic wrap or a plastic bag: Covering your container with plastic wrap or a plastic bag can help create a humid environment that encourages rooting.
7. A warm, well-lit area: Fig cuttings require warmth and bright, indirect light to root successfully. Choose a warm, well-lit area in your home or garden to place your container.
8. Optional: [Grow lights](#) or a [heat mat](#): If you're rooting your fig cuttings indoors, you may want to consider using a grow light or a heat mat to provide additional warmth and light.

By gathering these materials and following the steps outlined in this book, you can successfully root fig cuttings and grow your own fig tree.

I wish you much success and I know you can do it! I too started somewhere and a few years later, I can now root fig cuttings at almost any time of the year I want and you can too!

By Rigo Amador of [Fig Database®](#), Your one stop site for all of your fig research and social resources. The Fig Database is your customized, searchable database of edible fig varieties with advanced search, filtering, ratings, individual record keeping and social networking from and for collectors like you.

Be sure to follow my new [blog](#) with much new content about fig varieties. Check out the [fig directory](#) and our new small [forum](#). Be sure to also visit my YouTube channel [here](#).