



Tony Glover
Regional Extension Agent
News Release

Propagating Fig Trees

Question: I have a wonderful fig tree in my yard that I want to take with me when I move but it is much too large to move – any suggestions?

Answer: Figs are easy to propagate because they root very easily. There are several ways to propagate them. The most common method is to root cuttings taken in late winter or early spring so now is a great time.

Take cuttings about 6 inches long and pencil to finger thick. If the weather is still unsettled and frost is likely, store the cuttings in a sealed zippered bag in the produce bin in your refrigerator. However, if the weather is warm and likely to stay warm, pot your cuttings. Place a half sheet of newspaper tightly into the bottom of a 4 or 6 inch-deep plastic pot (don't use this part of the paper, I suggest the commentary section for it's nutritional value to the plants). Put a little sand or a good-quality potting mix in the bottom of the pot, then stand one to four cuttings upright in the pot, and fill the pot the rest of the way with more sand or potting mix.

Water the pot thoroughly, and set it in a very bright but not a direct sun location. It should be warm--at least 70 degrees F. If you cannot keep the air temperature above 70, provide bottom heat to bring the soil temperature up. Cover the pot with an empty 2- or 3-liter soft drink bottle with the lid on and the bottom cut out. Do not water the cuttings again until they are very dry. Lift the pot occasionally to test for dryness. If the pot is very light, set it in a pan of water, and let it soak. When you see vigorous growth, it is time to harden off the new plants. Remove the bottle cap, and see how the plants do. If the plants look to be thriving after a few days, remove the bottle. If the plants begin to wilt, cover them again with the bottle.

After a few days, it will be time to pot up the new plants. Don't do this just because you see leaves growing. Sometimes there will be four or five leaves and few if any roots. Wait until you see vigorous growth. Pot the plants in individual plastic pots (1 gallon size), and apply a light application of liquid fertilizer. In 4 to 6 weeks, depending on the vigor of the variety and the weather, the plants will be ready either for a larger pot or for in-ground planting. When you plant them in the ground keep them well watered until they have rooted in very well. This usually takes one summer of careful attention. A 2 or 3 inch layer of mulch will help the new plants conserve moisture, keep the new roots cooler and provide cold protection in the winter.

Figs are a fun and easy fruit plant to grow in our area. They are cold sensitive to temperatures in the teens or below but will usually come back from the root if well established. They are interesting fruit because they do not require pollination at all to produce their delicious fruit. One plant is likely all you will need unless you want to make a winters supply of fig preserves. Because they produce fruit parthenocarpically (without pollination) they tend to fall off easily under stress. In our area the stress is usually a drought during fruit enlargement. You may want to place a soaker hose around the plant and give it a weekly soaking while the fruit are maturing.

For more information visit the following web sites: www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-1145/ or <http://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheets/HGIC1353.htm> or contact Tony Glover, Regional Extension Agent at the St. Clair County Extension office at (205) 338-9416 or email gloveta@aces.edu.

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