



## CHICAGO FIG

### Growing in pots

Grow the Hardy Chicago Fig Tree in a pot that can be easily moved in for winter care. Transplant them directly into a 10 inch pot to start and you can later up pot them to a 5 to 10 gallon container. These like to feel secure in their containers and will grow well in a tight container. The container itself will also help to shrink the overall size of the tree. A 10 to 15 gallon container could be this plant's final home. They will continue to grow year after year and respond to trimming. These can easily grow to about 12 ft tall and about 10 ft wide. Depending on how you trim them you can shape them to grow as a bush or as a tree. Make sure to feed them at least once a month and more when they are fruiting and to keep their soil moist, but not wet. Seaweed and 10-52-17 is an excellent food.

### Pinching

Pinching is a technique that is required in colder climates. This means that many figs will not have enough time to fully develop before the first frost hits. A way to avoid that happening is by pinching. This is the act of pinching off new leaf growth as its budding. Of course you don't want to do that to all new leafs, but only after the fourth leaf on a given branch. This will cause the plant to double its energy and produce a fruit there. If you do this properly the figs will develop earlier and make it through the ripening stage. It takes a fig about two months to fully ripen.

### Fruit

The interesting fact about the Fig is that it has to be left on the tree to fully ripen. If you take it off the tree early it will stay under-ripe and if you leave it to long it could get too mushy and most likely fall off. Now, the trouble with this if grown outside you will attract a lot of insects and birds. So you must learn to fend them off and to wait until the fruit is fully mature. You will know when the fruit is ready to pick when it is fairly soft and can be squished easily. This is a fairly delicate fruit and can bruise or tear easily when ripe. Also, check the eye on the bottom of the fruit. Once it is fully open you will know that it is ready to harvest. When removing make sure to cut or break off from the stem. If you try to remove too close to the fruit it will tear or leak some white liquid. This liquid is irritating so make sure to wear gloves if you are not used to harvesting figs. Once these are removed from the tree you will see that they spoil rather quickly. This is one reason they are so expensive and hard to find when you go to the supermarket. Their shelf life (for most varieties) is only about 7 days. For cooking purposes you can remove them a little earlier when they are more firm and those will last almost 10 days, but will never be as sweet as if left to fully mature.

