

# A Guide to Brown Turkey Fig Trees

*This Old House Reviews Team*

The [Brown Turkey fig tree](#) is an ideal choice for the gardener who is just learning how to care for fruit trees. Keep reading to learn how to effectively grow a Brown Turkey fig tree and steps you can take to maintain one throughout the years.

## Brown Turkey Fig Tree Overview

Characteristic	Description
Fruit size	Up to four inches long
Fruit uses	Eat fresh or cooked
Fruit color	Green skin before ripe, deep purple skin when ripe; orange-pink flesh
Fruit texture and flavor	Soft texture, sweet flavor
Region	South, West Coast
Hardiness zone	7–10
Growing season	Ripens in early spring and produces two crops; pick in late spring or early summer and again in late summer and early fall
Susceptibility	Fig mosaic, pink blight, leaf blight, rust, fruit souring
Characteristic	Description

## What Does a Brown Turkey Fig Tree Look Like?

The Brown Turkey fig tree has green leaves during the spring and summer, but they turn yellow in the fall and go dormant in the winter. The fig fruits start out with green skin and turn brownish-purple when ripe, and the inside of the fig is soft with orange-pink flesh. Brown Turkey fig trees can grow between 15–30 feet tall with an equal spread.

## Growing Conditions for a Brown Turkey Fig Tree

For the best results, follow these growing instructions for a Brown Turkey fig tree:

### Sun, Shade, and Soil

Brown Turkey fig trees need full sun, so choose a spot in your yard that gets direct sunlight. These trees can grow in virtually any soil type, including heavy clay, limestone, and light sand, but they prefer a well-drained soil with high lime content. Note: these fast-growing trees can tolerate slightly salty soil, but not acidic soil, so make sure the pH is between 6.0 and 6.5.

### Fertilizer

Fig trees don't require regular fertilization, however, if you notice that your tree is growing less than 12

inches in one growing season, you can add half a pound of nitrogen supplement to the base of the tree. Break this into three or four feedings starting in late winter and going until midsummer.

You can also apply a two- or three-inch layer of mulch around the tree at any time to prevent weeds and lock in root moisture. Make sure the mulch doesn't touch the trunk, as too much moisture around the trunk can cause bark decay which can attract pests and fungi.

## Watering

The Brown Turkey fig tree requires two waterings per week for the first three months after it's planted. Mature trees require one to 1.5 inches of water per week. If your area is going through a dry spell, you can stick your finger two inches down into the soil to test the moisture level and determine if a watering is necessary. One sign that the tree needs water is yellow leaves that start to wilt.

## Hardiness Zones

Brown Turkey fig trees thrive in [zones 7–10](#), which include states like North Carolina, South Carolina, and Arizona. If you live in a cooler state below zone 7, like Pennsylvania or New Jersey, you can grow a fig tree in a pot inside your home.

## How to Plant a Brown Turkey Fig Tree

When you order a Brown Turkey fig tree, you'll most likely be sent a medium-sized bare root tree, a dormant tree shipped with no soil around the roots. The best time to plant this tree is in early spring or late fall when the tree is dormant. You can plant it in the ground or a container, following this process:

1. Since fig trees can grow to be 20 to 30 feet wide and put down deep roots, select a planting site that's far away from your house and other plants.
2. Dig a hole that's a few inches deeper and wider than the spread of the roots.
3. Set the tree on a small mound of soil in the middle of the hole.
4. Spread the roots away from the tree without excessively bending them.
5. Plant the tree two to four inches deeper than it was planted in the original container. You can look at the trunk to find the soil line that indicates how deep it was.
6. Refill the hole with soil and water until the water reaches the root system.

The Brown Turkey fig tree has to grow for three to five years before bearing fruit for the first time. Since this tree will outlive you (most Brown Turkey fig trees have a lifespan of about 200 years), you only have to worry about buying and planting this tree once.



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## **Tolerance and Susceptibility**

The Brown Turkey fig is susceptible to a variety of problems, including fig mosaic, pink blight, leaf blight, rust, and fruit souring. Fig mosaic is a virus that starts as a yellow-spotted pattern and ultimately stunts foliage and fruit growth. Pink blight is a fungus that starts out as a white or pink velvety coating on sick or dead branches. It eventually spreads to healthy areas of the tree and stunts growth.

Leaf blight is a disease characterized by yellow, water-soaked spots that spread and dry out, leaving behind a papery surface. It causes holes to form in the leaves, and in severe cases, turns the leaves brown and kills the tree. Rust is another major fungal disease that causes leaves to turn yellow or brown and drop, and yeast causes the delicious figs to sour on the tree and ooze or bubble liquid that smells like

fermentation.

## Wildlife Threats

Insects are the biggest threat to Brown Turkey fig trees because many of them cause the diseases described above. Fig mites are responsible for fig mosaic, and vinegar flies and dried fruit beetles cause fruit souring. You can prevent these pests naturally with neem oil, horticultural oil, or insecticidal soap.

Birds and bats can steal figs off your tree during the harvesting season. You can purchase wire baskets to put around the tree to keep these animals out.

## Final Thoughts

The [Brown Turkey fig tree](#) is an adaptable plant that can grow in most environments with little maintenance. While the tree is susceptible to diseases and wildlife threats, damage to your tree is mostly avoidable with insecticides and wire baskets. You can buy this tree [online](#) or at your local home improvement store.

## Frequently Asked Questions About Brown Turkey Fig Trees

### Do I need to prune my Brown Turkey fig tree?

Fig trees don't require a lot of [pruning](#), but you can remove dead, dying, or crowded branches during the winter to promote growth and help the tree maintain its shape.

### What is the difference between Brown Turkey figs and Black Mission figs?

Black mission figs are a deep blue-purple color on the outside with a pink flesh inside, are known for their sweetness, and often ooze a syrupy substance. Brown Turkey figs have a deep brown-purple color on the outside and a paler pink color on the inside. They are milder in flavor and less sweet than the Black Mission fig.

### How do I plant fig tree cuttings?

You can use a stem from your already planted fig tree to create another fig tree. Select a stem that's at least two years old and slimmer than your index finger, cut the stem off at a 45-degree angle, and replant it in a pot.

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