

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



PHOTO CREDIT: William M. Johnson

Home gardeners in Galveston County frequently have fruit trees in their landscapes and the fig is certainly one of the most popular. Master Gardener Terry Cullis will provide a hands-on demonstration on pruning figs at 9:00 a.m. on Thursday, March 21, in the Discovery Garden in Carbide Park in La Marque.

Home gardeners in Galveston County frequently have fruit trees in their landscapes, and the fig is certainly one of the most popular. If you're a fan of figs, you'll be glad to know that fig trees are one of the easiest fruit trees to grow around your home. With little care, they will

produce crops of juicy, sweet figs every year. The fruit is tasty and can be eaten fresh, made into preserves and jams, or used in baking. Figs make nice additions to landscape plantings.

The fig, *Ficus carica*, was first introduced to the

Americas in 1575 by Spanish explorers in Florida. Figs originated in the Old World Tropics in the Mediterranean region where it has been cultivated since as early as 5,000 BC.

Local gardeners grow several cultivars of figs.



March 20, 2019



Dr. William Johnson is a horticulturist with the Galveston County Office of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Visit his website at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston>.

News column printed in the Galveston Daily News, The Post, and other Galveston County Newspapers.



One of the most popular and reliable fig cultivars is known as Celeste which happens to be my favorite cultivar. Celeste figs are small- to medium-size fruits with purplish-bronze to light brown skin color. Celeste begins ripening in early July and is good fresh or processed. I'm partial to the sweet flavor of freshly harvested Celeste figs.

Another popular cultivar of fig is known as LSU Purple which has medium-size, dark-purple fruit and good resistance to foliage diseases. LSU Purple has a tendency to produce three distinct crops, a light crop in early spring, a heavy main crop in early July and a later crop sometimes lasting into the fall.

Figs should be planted in a sunny location away from large trees with overhanging branches. Figs will not produce well unless they receive at least eight hours of direct sun daily, and more is better.

Fig trees ordinarily do not produce a good crop of fruit until the third or fourth year after planting. One- to four-year-old trees often produce fruit (you'll see little green figs where the leaves join the stem), but it usually fails to ripen and drops off. LSU Purple is an exception, often producing small crops one to two years after planting.

You may train your fig into a large bush-like shape with several trunks or into a more typical tree shape with a single trunk. You won't need to do much pruning the first few years after planting – other than beginning to shape it the way you want it to grow.

Now is great time to prune fig trees to ensure maximum production of fruit that can be easily harvested, i.e., does not require a ladder to harvest high-hanging fruits. Yearly pruning helps to maintain vigor, create the desired shape of the tree and control its size (which makes harvesting easier).

It is better to moderately prune your fig every year or two than to allow it to grow so large that severe pruning is required. Most of the branches cut back should be no larger than 1 inch to 2 inches in diameter.

If significantly cutting back is done to substantially reduce the size of or rejuvenate an older tree, fruit production the following summer generally will be reduced. The tree should, however, produce well thereafter.

Describing how to prune a fig tree, or any other tree in a home landscape, is a relatively straightforward task. However, I have observed that when it comes to actually pruning a tree (regardless as to whether the tree is for food production or for landscape aesthetics), many gardeners are a bit hesitant to make that first cut. To enhance gardeners' confidence in accomplishing the task of pruning figs, Master Gardeners will provide a user-friendly hands-on demonstration.

Master Gardner Terry Cuclis has years of experience growing a wide variety of figs. Terry will provide a hands-on demonstration for pruning figs in the Discovery Garden located in Carbide Park (4102 Main

Figs ~ Easy to Grow in Home Landscapes

Street in La Marque) at 9:00 a.m. on Thursday, March 21. Terry will also discuss growing figs. His program is free of charge. Pre-registration is requested (phone: 281-309-5065; e-mail galvcountymgs@gmail.com).

Upcoming Programs

Figs, Peaches & Avocados . . . A

Trio of Hands-on Demonstrations:

Master Gardeners Terry Cuclis, David Cooper and Robert Marshall will provide (in order of sequence) hands-on demonstrations of fig pruning, thinning of peach fruits, and proper planting of avocado trees. The demonstrations will start at 9:00 a.m. on Thursdays, March 21, in the Discovery Garden located in Carbide Park (4102 Main Street in La Marque).

Tomato Stress Management. 9:00

a.m. - 11:30 a.m., Saturday, March 23, at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office located at 4102-B Main Street (Carbide Park) in La Marque. No fee but pre-registration requested (phone: 281-309-5065; e-mail galvcountymgs@gmail.com).

Snake Sense for Homeowners.

1:00 - 3:00 p.m., Saturday, March 23 at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office located at 4102-B Main Street (Carbide Park) in La Marque. No fee but pre-registration requested (phone: 281-309-5065; e-mail galvcountymgs@gmail.com).

