

ABIDE A WHILE

GARDEN BOUTIQUE



Tips for Successfully Growing Fiddle Leaf Figs

Native to the tropics in Africa, *Ficus lyrata*, commonly known as Fiddle-Leaf Fig, can grow up to 100' in its rainforest habitat. Fortunately, they are slow growers and stay much shorter when grown as houseplants. Here are some tips to help you successfully grow one in your home.

LIGHT: A *brightly lit* spot without direct sunlight is best. Protect it from the afternoon sun. If kept too dark, it will not grow well. During the summer, it enjoys a shady spot outdoors.

WATER: Remember, this plant is native to a warm and wet climate. Keep it moist, but do not allow it to sit in water. Water it when the root ball is almost dry. (Leaves will droop when they need water.) Reduce watering in winter. Over-watering could cause root rot and the oldest leaves to turn yellow and drop. If under-watered, the newest leaves will turn brown, dry up, and drop.

TEMPERATURE: Best temperature is between 60 and 75 degrees F. Avoid temperatures lower than 55 degrees. Avoid cold drafts from windows, doors or air conditioning units which may cause the leaves to dry out and drop.

HUMIDITY: Normal room humidity is fine, but increase in the winter by misting the leaves if the heating system dries the air. You may want to lightly damp sponge leaves to remove dust and improve the glossy appearance.

SOIL: We recommend a good draining posing soil like Fafard.

FERTILIZER: The fiddle-leaf fig does not have a strong need for fertilizer like other ficus trees. Feed with a weak (diluted) liquid fertilizer about once a month during the growing season (spring and summer).

PRUNING: remove leaves as soon as you see them deteriorating and check for problems. You can prune the top to keep it at the desired height.

REPOTTING: Healthy fiddle-leaf figs will grow slowly as houseplants. They are top-heavy, so use a heavy pot to anchor the plant. Repot a young plant every spring, stepping up the pot size each year until it reaches the desired size, or until you cannot manage the container anymore. Once it has matured into a large container, scrape off the top two inches of soil and replace it with fresh potting soil annually.

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What if my fiddle-leaf fig...

HAS BROWN EDGES ON THE LEAVES AND IS DRY? This is probably due to low humidity or not enough water, or both. Remove the dry, brown leaves. Mist regularly. Make sure you water enough to wet all the way down to the roots.

HAS BROWN PATCHES AND SOFTENED LEAVES? More than likely, it has too much water, cold temperatures, or both. Is the soil wet on top through the bottom of the pot? If so, you might want to remove old soil and replace it. Increase the heat, lower the humidity, and see if that helps resolve the problem.

IS LOSING LEAVES? Some leaves will naturally drop when there is new growth. Another cause could be lack of water or low humidity, although you would notice leaf discoloration and dryness prior to leaves dropping. *If you have recently moved the plant to a new spot, it might have “shock,” and it will adjust. It does not like changes in light or temperature. Cold drafts could also cause leaf drop.*

HAS SPOTS? This is usually caused by injury to the leaf, either by mites or other source. A lack of air flow or too much moisture on the leaves can lead to fungal disease. Keep the plant well-trimmed and remove dead leaves and twigs as soon as you see them.

OTHER TIPS:

Fiddle-leaf figs are sensitive to high salt levels, so make sure you flush your potting medium monthly to prevent build-up of fertilizer salts.

Watch for webs between leaves and branches. This could indicate spider mites. Fiddle-leaf figs are also susceptible to scale, small brown insects that cling to stems and leaves and secrete a sticky residue. White fly, aphids, and mealy bugs could also take up residence. Inspect leaves regularly to identify any problems as soon as possible and treat with the least toxic option. Try wiping leaves with a solution of ½ teaspoon dishwashing detergent and one gallon of water.