

The Fiddle Leaf Fig

When taking home a new plant, there are some things to consider...

Let's start with sun: It's important that the plant is placed in the brightest location possible: in their natural habitat Fiddle Leaf Figs grow in full sun! Because of this, it can be challenging to provide these plants with enough light indoors. Try turning all the lights off every couple of hours to see just how much light is coming from the sun. If the tree is clearly visible and you are able to read easily by the sunlight alone for at least 5 hours a day, then the location is bright enough to sustain this plant. 5 hours of consistent bright light is the minimum requirement of this stately plant and if given 6+ hours, they really begin to thrive provided that their other growing conditions are met.

If your spot seems too dark, this plant may not be a good option for you. Otherwise, you should anticipate the plant shedding its leaves that get the least sun (usually the bottom or inner leaves). This occurrence is very common for transitioning Fiddle Leaf Figs and normally happens about 1-3 weeks in. The leaves will have a general fading of color to yellows and browns. Feel free to remove these leaves as soon as they start to turn. That will help speed things up. Fortunately, your plant just needs time to grow new leaves that more efficiently absorb light in its new home. 2-3 months in--if everything is going well--they are usually on their way to acclimating and starting to look good again!

If your new plant will be receiving light from only one direction or if it will be in a corner between two windows, then it is recommended to rotate it a bit every 2-3 weeks. If the plant is not turned occasionally it will develop a lopsided form that can only be fixed by hard pruning and will drop any foliage that faces a corner, creating permanent bald patches.

****Bonus note!** : It's always a good idea to keep your leaves clean. Any dust that settles on them will block out precious rays of light so even if you don't mist your leaves, do wipe them down with a lightly moistened cloth.

Temperature: These plants do not appreciate cold temperatures. They will absolutely tolerate cool A/C temps but they will not grow as quickly. Remember, warm soil temperatures tend to stimulate growth.

Humidity: A/C units dry out the air in our homes. Ideal placement of your tree is 15 feet away from any air vents. If the best spot for light is too close to an air vent, purchasing a vent cover to redirect or block the air might be essential, or even the addition of a humidifier nearby. If these aren't an option for you, misting the top and under-sides of the leaves even just once a day will help the tree to acclimate to your home easier. Misting with distilled or rain water is recommended as it will cut down on residue/deposits that tap water can leave.

Water: For starters, it is not advised that tap water be used to water Fiddle Leaf Figs--or any potted plant for that matter. The Chloramine in city water is to blame; over time it will sterilize the beneficial microorganisms that your plant depends on to stay healthy and *Ficus lyrata* are especially sensitive to it.

Rain, distilled, de-ionized or reverse osmosis filtered water are the options to go with. If nothing else, amended or de-chlorinated water works just fine, too.

***It's important to note that not all de-chlorinators will remove Chloramine. Any fish/pet store should be able to help determine an appropriate option to remove both Chlorine and Chloramine. Another common question is "Will boiling the water help?" The answer is yes, but it takes over two hours of boiling to remove Chloramine from tap water, while Chlorine is removed at a much faster rate- about 15 minutes. Our personal favourite to recommend is Prime, which can be found at most pet stores.

If your plant is really dry and the right resources aren't available, you should still water your plant (even with city water!) but it's a good idea to use microbial inoculants to re-introduce the beneficial cultures back in your soil. To name a few, Fox Farm's **Microbrew** and **Kangaroots** are two great liquid options that you dilute with water before using on your plant. This will help immensely to correct the damage done by city water.

Fertilizing: Fox Farms **Happy Frog** line and **Microlife 6-2-4** are *granular* fertilizers that are also microbial inoculants. Really good stuff. If you have watering under control, **Microlife 6-2-4** might be the only thing necessary to keep your plant going strong. Our favourite liquid fertilizers are Fox Farm's **Grow Big** and Microlife's **Ocean Harvest**. It is ideal to fertilize every 3 months with granulars, and every two to four weeks with liquid fertilizers. The appropriate time to fertilize is Spring through early Fall. Fertilize once a month or not at all during the Winter depending on the hours of light available.

Soil: Our favourite soil for tropicals and houseplants is Fox Farms **Ocean Forest**, with **Happy Frog** coming in second. **Ocean Forest** is especially great for thick glazed pots, pots glazed both inside & out and glass or metal pots. **Happy Frog** works best with Terra Cotta, as it retains more moisture than **Ocean Forest**.

Watering: It's very important that water is only applied as needed. Indoors, plants aren't growing as quickly as they would outside. Because of that, they aren't drinking as quickly and waterings tend to be rather spaced out in an interior setting. There are many variables (plant species/age, temperature, light, airflow, pot shape/thickness/height etc.) that determine how often you should water but it generally takes anywhere from 6-14 days for the soil to become dry enough to re-saturate.

I like to gauge the moisture content by sticking my finger in a couple of different spots around the soil. If the top 20-25% of soil on top is dry, it is about time to water. Liberally saturate until there are no more dry pockets anywhere in the soil. (Air bubbles rising to the surface indicate dry pockets below.) The pot/soil should be significantly heavier when watering is done. If you feel uncertain about watering or just don't want to get your hands dirty, a Moisture Meter is a cheap and indispensable tool!

***Do not be afraid to over-water in one sitting.** Over-watering occurs when plants are watered too often and not given a chance to dry out. If your plant sits in a drainage saucer then be sure to discard any pooled water after 24 hours, as that can lead to many problems like root rot, fungal/bacterial activity, etc. I like to use a turkey baster as a syringe to suck that water out.

If your plant is looking good, it's probably doing well. Alternatively, if it starts to look sad or damaged in anyway, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us. We're always happy to troubleshoot and help your plants regain their health and glory!

Best Wishes,
The Great Outdoors