



# How-To: **OVERWINTERING FIG TREES**

*While fig trees are a semi-tropical plant that prefer balmy weather, some varieties can be grown in colder climes if they are carefully protected over the winter. Figs can also be grown in large containers and brought inside in the winter. However, figs produce the most and grow healthiest when they grow in the ground. Plan to bury or wrap your in-ground fig in November, when the leaves drop. Expose the tree to the elements again in late April or early May.*



A YOUNG FIG TREE AT SHILOH PEACE FARM — WAIT UNTIL MOST TO ALL OF THE LEAVES HAVE DROPPED BEFORE WRAPPING



THE FIG, LOOSELY WRAPPED WITH BURLAP



THE FIRST BURLAP WRAPPING, FILLED WITH MULCH

## **OPTION 1: BURY YOUR TREE**

Italian fig growers traditionally bury their fig trees in the ground for the winter. Burying protects them from severe winters and the fig tree almost always survives.

1. Dig a deep trench out from the fig tree, as long as the tree is tall. The trench should be deep enough to encompass the whole fig tree when it is tied and bent into the ground. Large fig trees may need a trench as deep as 2 feet.

2. Lift the tree's branches and bundle them tightly together using sturdy twine, cable, or rope. The tree should look like a rocket ship when you are finished. Very small trees may not need bundling, but should be pruned back halfway, to encourage them to fill out next season.

3. Dig about a foot deep around the root ball of the fig tree. This should loosen the roots enough that the tree can be bent to the side. You will cut through many roots, which will not harm the tree, as long as the central root ball is left intact.

4. Bend the tree into the trench. Many small and medium roots will snap, but the largest ones should stay intact. Fig trees are very resilient and breaking these roots will not harm the tree.

5. Backfill soil into the trench. Then, cover with more organic matter; leaves or straw work well. Some gardeners prefer to cover the trench with plywood and then organic matter. The tree should be covered with at least 1 foot of soil and organic materials.

## **OPTION 2: WRAP YOUR TREE**

Wrapping your tree can be less time-consuming than burying it. In most years, this method will protect your fig through the winter. In severe winters, the fig may die or at least die back so that new growth must sprout from the roots.

1. Prune young fig trees back about halfway, to encourage branching and bushy growth next season. For older, larger trees, pull the branches together and carefully bind with twine.

2. Mulch the tree heavily with straw or leaves. Fill the gathered branches with mulch or secure mulch around the top areas of a young tree by wrapping with twine.

3. Wrap the mulched tree with burlap or brown paper, tying or stapling to secure.



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ANOTHER LAYER OF BURLAP  
ADDED

4. Dig a circular shallow trench a foot or two outside the base of the mulched tree. Create a second layer of mulching and wrapping, placing the bottom of the wrapping material in the trench.

5. Fill in the trench with soil, to secure the wrapping.

6. Place a bucket insulated with straw upside down on top of the wrapped tree. Alternatively, cap the top with more mulch and wrapping.



THE FIG, CAPPED WITH MORE  
MULCH AND BURLAP — READY  
FOR WINTER!