

## *Ficus carica*

### Scientific classification

Kingdom	: Plantae
Clade	: Angiosperms
Order	: Rosales
Family	: Moraceae
Genus	: <i>Ficus</i>
Species	: <i>F. carica</i>



*Ficus carica*

## Description

*Ficus carica* is a gynodioecious, deciduous tree or large shrub that grows up to 7–10 metres (23–33 ft) tall, with smooth white bark. Its fragrant leaves are 12–25 centimetres (4.7–9.8 in) long and 10–18 centimetres wide, and are deeply lobed (three or five lobes).

The fig fruit develops as a hollow, fleshy structure called the syconium that is lined internally with numerous unisexual flowers. The tiny flowers bloom inside this cup-like structure. Although commonly called a fruit, the syconium is botanically an infructescence, a type of multiple fruit. The small fig flowers and later small single-seeded (true) fruits line its interior surface. A small opening or ostiole, visible on the middle of the fruit, is a narrow passage that allows the specialized fig wasp, *Blastophaga psenes* to enter the inflorescence and pollinate the flowers, after which each fertilized ovule (one per flower, in its ovary) develops into a seed. At maturity, these 'seeds' (actually single-seeded fruits) line the inside of each fig. See *Ficus: Fig fruit and reproduction system*.

The edible mature syconium stem develops into a fleshy false fruit bearing the numerous one-seeded fruits, which are technically drupelets.<sup>[9]</sup> The whole fig fruit is 3–5 centimetres (1.2–2.0 in) long, with a green skin that sometimes ripens toward purple or brown. *Ficus carica* has milky sap, produced by laticifer cells. The sap of the green parts is an irritant to human skin.

## Medicinal uses

A decoction of the leaves is stomachic. The leaves are also added to boiling water and used as a steam bath for painful or swollen piles. The latex contains the proteolytic enzyme ficin - this has the property of destroying round-worms and, in some instances, hook-worms. The enzyme, however, is more or less injurious to the intestine. Syrup of figs, made from the fruit, is a well-known and effective gentle laxative that is also suitable for the young and very old. A decoction of the young branches is an excellent pectoral