



Fiddle-leaf Fig – *Ficus lyrata*

“This decade belongs, undeniably, to the fiddle-leaf fig.” – *New York Times, Fashion and Style*

Described by designers and garden writers as the “houseplant equivalent of a newborn” with a “prehistoric, Dr. Seuss feel,” the fiddle-leaf fig is currently dominating design choices with its sculptural qualities and endearing whimsy. Bringing drama and structure to commercial as well as living spaces comes at a price, however: keeping this somewhat finicky, “emotional” plant in great shape. Here are some tips we’ve found to be helpful to keep your “[I](#)” potted plant of the moment thriving:

In a Nutshell:

Light: Bright, indirect light	Temperature: Low to average: 60° - 75° a steady 68° is optimum
Moisture: Even; let dry somewhat before watering	Fertilization: Every two weeks at ½ strength, spring through fall; nothing in winter
Humidity: Average room humidity; likes misting	

The Explanation:

- *Ficus lyrata* is native to the lowland tropical rainforest of western Africa from Sierra Leone to Cameroon where it can grow 100 feet tall and 60 feet wide and will fruit like other figs – but only with its native wasp pollinator. In the US, fiddle-leaf figs must be kept indoors from early fall to late spring except for Zones 10 south. Confined to a pot, it will top off around 10 feet and though young plants grow as single leafy stem, it will expand in width with judicious pruning.
- Place your *Ficus lyrata* in very bright, indirect light, such as an east-facing window. Failure to thrive most often occurs when light levels are too low. This is a plant that likes to be kept at a consistent temperature, so keep it away from heat and air conditioning vents as well as drafty windows and doors. High traffic areas and cramped conditions are also a threat: bends, cuts and bruises will permanently damage those big, rigid leaves. Give the pot a ¼ turn every other week to keep the plant from leaning toward the light source, and gently wipe dust from the leaves with a damp cloth.
- This is a plant that likes to dry out *slightly* between waterings – when the top 1”-2” of soil are dry, it’s time to water. Overwatering will cause the leaves to turn brown and fall. The humidity of a room will affect how often you need to water and using a humidifier during the drier winter months is helpful. Your watering schedule will also vary as the seasons progress – spring and summer are times of active growth and your plant will need more moisture. This is also the time to lightly feed your plant: every two weeks at ½ strength from March to September but nothing in winter.
- If you wish to train your *Ficus lyrata* into a tree form, wait until the single stalk has reached about 3 feet tall then carefully prune the growing tip. It may take several tries before your plant begins branching. Always prune in early spring before the flush of growth in the stem and leaves. Alternately, several single-stems may be planted together in a shorter, bushy form. In either case, *Ficus lyrata* prefers slightly cramped root conditions so delay repotting until it absolutely outgrows its pot with roots coming out of the drainage holes or circling the top of the pot. Once it reaches its maximum size, switch to merely topdressing with fresh potting soil every other year. As it is growing taller, a heavy cachepot will keep your *Ficus lyrata* from toppling and give it a more finished, balanced look.