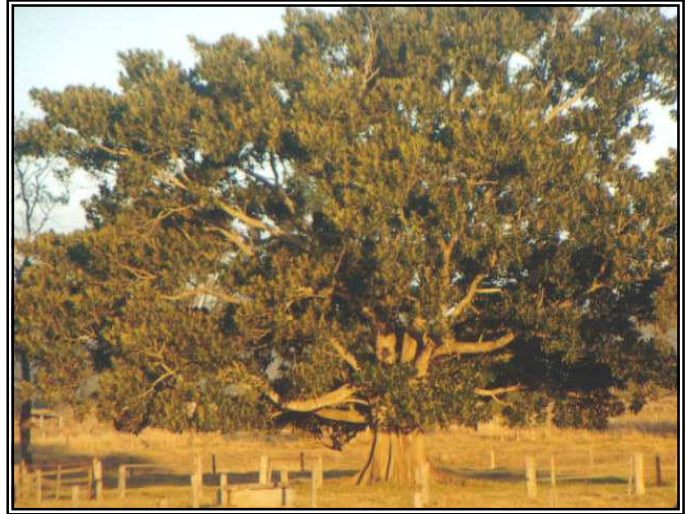


Strangler figs

Native fig trees can provide an excellent fast growing replacement of camphor laurels. When “strangler figs” are planted in the forks of branches or stumps above the height of browsing animals they can be a cheap form of replacement due to the fact that fencing around the tree is not usually required.

Mature “strangler” fig tree. Source: T.Scanlon.



Which species?

Native strangler fig trees most suitable include **Moreton Bay Fig** (*Ficus macrophylla*), **Small-leaved Fig** (*F. obliqua*), **Port Jackson Fig** (*F. rubiginosa*), **Deciduous Fig** (*F. superba* var. *henniana*), **White Fig** (*F. virens* var. *sublanceolata*) and **Strangler Fig** (*F. watkinsiana*) (Wallace 1981). They can be grown from seed, local cuttings or purchased from nurseries.

Not all fig species are strangler figs. Creek Sandpaper Fig (*F. coronata*) and Sandpaper Fig (*F. fraseri*) grow best in the ground.



Where to plant?

Strangler Figs can be planted in the fork of branches where there is a large enough depression to support the seedling and soil, in planter boxes (with some holes to allow roots to penetrate) in trees, or; in the stump of a hollow dead camphor laurel or other trees. When planting in the fork of a tree it is often necessary to remove some branches to increase the light available to the fig. Initial follow-up watering is generally required. Native fig trees can also be planted directly into the ground (however more protection is required from grazing animals etc.) as part of a clump planting with pioneer species such as wattles.

“Strangler” Fig in a camphor laurel. Source: T.Scanlon.

How to encourage growth?

Native fig trees can be fed regularly using slow-release fertiliser (or rotted cow manure when established) and require plenty of water and nutrients. In ideal conditions, strangler figs can take over their host within 15-20 years.