

# Ancient figs may be first cultivated crop

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Ancient figs unearthed at an archaeological site in the Jordan Valley may be the earliest cultivated fruit, U.S. and Israeli scientists say.

The figs, between 11,200 and 11,400 years old, are a variety that could only have been grown with human intervention, as they produced no fertile seeds, the journal *Science* reported Friday.

A team of two botanists and an archaeologist said the find could mark the point when humans turned from hunting and gathering to food cultivation.

Nine small figs and 313 smaller fig fragments were discovered in a house in an early Neolithic village, called Gilgal I, near Jericho in Israel's West Bank.

The researchers, from Harvard University and Israel's Bar-Ilan University, concluded that the figs were an early domestic crop rather than a wild breed, as they could only reproduce if a shoot were removed and replanted.

"In this intentional act of planting a specific variant of fig tree, we can see the beginnings of agriculture. This edible fig would not have survived if not for human intervention," the BBC quoted Harvard archaeologist Dr. Ofer Bar-Yosef as saying.

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