

Asimina triloba

(Common) Pawpaw

Tried and True
Native Plants
of the Mid-Atlantic

Pawpaw fruit, with a complex tropical taste (some say banana-mango-citrus) and custard-like texture, is the largest edible fruit native to North America and gives rise to common names like False Banana and Custard Apple. Unpalatable to deer, Pawpaw is increasingly prevalent in the upland understories deer frequent. It commonly grows in river valleys and bottomlands in the Mid-Atlantic Region from southern Pennsylvania through Virginia.



Tree	July & October Trees, Foliage, Flowers, Fruit	
Height: 15–30 feet		
Spread: 15–30 feet		
Bloom Color: Maroon		
Characteristics		
Round, small, short-trunked deciduous tree or large, multi- stemmed shrub with suckering habit		
Alternate , obovate to lanceolate , pendulous, 6-12” leaves, glabrous above, pubescent below		
Bell-shaped flowers with 3 sepals , 3 outer & 3 inner petals , fetid odor, and hairy pedicels April to June		
Edible,* tropical-tasting, green berry , 3–6 inches long, ripens to yellowish late summer/early fall		
Fall foliage dull to bright yellow to copper		
Smooth brown to lenticel -speckled gray bark		
Spreading root suckers can form colonies		
Attributes		
Tolerates wet soil and Black Walnut; no serious pests or diseases; deer rarely damage		
Ethnobotanic use as yellow dye from fruit pulp		
Attracts flies and beetles to pollinate flowers; birds, mammals, and box turtles eat fruit; larval host for ~13 lepidopterans including Zebra Swallowtail		
Growing and Maintenance Tips	Excellent Replacement for	
Soil Requirements : Average, well-drained	<i>Elaeagnus angustifolia</i> and E. umbellata - Russian-olive and Autumn-olive	
Light Requirements : Sun, Partial Shade	Paulownia tomentosa - Princess Tree	
Water Requirements : Moist, Wet	<i>Rhamnus cathartica</i> and <i>R. frangula</i> - Common Buckthorn and Glossy Buckthorn	
Plant two or more genetic strains to produce best fruit	*Eat pulp raw (cut fruit in half and scoop out) or use for custard, pies, or ice cream. Don't eat skin or seeds. Some find the taste vile, experience gastrointestinal upset, or develop skin irritation when handling. Fruit can pose a litter problem if not eaten or harvested.	
Use as a fruit tree or in rain or native plant gardens		
Hardiness : USDA Zones 5a-9b		
developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria		

Images by Mary Free (July tree, foliage, flower) and Christa Watters (fruit), Simpson Park Demonstration Garden and by Elaine Mills (October tree), Meadowlark Botanical Gardens



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