



PAWPAW TREE (ASIMINA TRILOBA)

TREE FACTS

Pawpaws are a **deciduous, understory shrub native to North America** that produce the largest fruit of any native species! It belongs to the custard apple or soursop (**ANNONACEAE**) family with many relatives in the tropics. It **produces custardy fruit that ripens in September** and tastes a bit like a cross between a mango and a banana.

The tree can grow up to **14-20 feet tall and wide**, and features oblong, ovate leaves, and upside-down, velvety, maroon flowers from March-May that contain several ovaries and can produce multiple fruits. The flowers are pollinated by specific species of flies, beetles, and the zebra swallowtail butterfly. The fruit looks similar to a mango, turning from green to yellow or brown when ripe, with a short shelf-life. They have thin skin that bruises easily and a row of 5 to 14 thick, lima-bean shaped seeds inside. Pawpaw trees are prone to producing **root suckers** a few feet from the original trunk and can create a **grove** when left to their own wild nature!

SEASONAL CARE

Pawpaws are relatively easy to establish and generally pest-free. They favor filtered to full sunlight (when established after the first few years) and well-draining, slightly acidic soil (pH 5-7). Pawpaws have perfect flowers (male and female reproductive parts) but are **self-incompatible** and **require cross-pollination** from another unrelated pawpaw tree.

WINTER/SPRING: Protect a young pawpaw through its first winters by wrapping or winterizing with extra leaf mulch! Little if any pruning is required.

SUMMER: Water 2-3x a week on a slow drip at its base for the first couple months, then taper off to once/week. Use a screen to keep the pawpaw in partial sun for its first years. Apply high-potassium organic fertilizers like fish/seaweed twice a year.

FALL: Harvest the ripe fruit, usually over a couple weeks in mid September!

NUTRITIONAL BENEFITS

Paw paws can be eaten raw or cooked, but should be eaten moderately as they have mild laxative effect. The large berry contains notable amounts of vitamin C (heals wounds), potassium (lowers blood pressure), iron (forms red blood cells), manganese (strengthens bones), magnesium (supports muscle & nerve function), and copper (supports immune system).

STARTING PAWPAWS FROM SEED

Save pawpaw seeds to grow your own tree! Place them in a plastic freezer bag with a handful of moist sphagnum moss and refrigerate 90-120 days at 32-40 degrees F. **Stratification** is required for stored seeds, as they have **embryo dormancy** and an **impermeable seedcoat** that can take up to 18 months to germinate. Plant in gallon-size pots with potting soil of good fertility. Germination can be expected in 7-10 weeks, with the seed sending down a 10 inch long taproot before the shoot emerges. When seedlings are large enough to handle, dispense them into individual pots to grow in a greenhouse for their first winter. Plant them into their permanent positions in early summer, once the plants are more than 15cm tall, and avoid disturbing the roots. Protect them from the cold for their first outdoor winter or two. **It takes about 4-8 years for a pawpaw to produce fruit from seed.**

