

Pawpaw

Asimina triloba

A Garden Guide

Pawpaws (*Asimina triloba*) are native to WNC, and throughout the Appalachian region. You can occasionally find them along moist streambanks, where they will form clonal thickets. These remarkably delicious fruits taste somewhere between banana and mango. The tropical-looking foliage hints at their background - all their genetic cousins still reside there. It is thought that megafauna were once an important part of their lifecycle. They are the sole host for the Zebra Swallowtail Butterfly (*Protographium marcellus*). Pawpaws are juglone tolerant and can be planted near or under Black Walnut (*Juglans nigra*) trees.



They do not ship well and are rarely found for sale. The best way to ensure access to this too-rare culinary gem is to grow your own.

Pollination: Best fruit production with multiple types of Pawpaws. They are pollinated by flies, which they attract by creating a distinctive smell. Flies do not always do a great job; hand pollination will improve fruit set.

Siting: Being native to moist, rich, bottomlands, they love water. Their first few years of life they may benefit from some shade, to mimic how they grow in the wild, but best fruit production in their later years comes from being in full sun (6-8 hours of direct sunlight). Plant Pawpaws 5-7' apart.

Soil and Planting: Pawpaws prefer a pH of 5.5-6.5, with moist, well-draining soil. Usually in our soils, pawpaw trees will need at least 1/3rd soil conditioner, up to 1/3rd rich composts, mixed with our native clay. Gently applying mycorrhizae directly to the roots, just prior to planting, will improve tree resilience. Dig a hole 2-3x as wide as the pot, only as deep as the pot, plant the tree in the soil at the same height as it was in the pot. Apply 2-3" of mulch to the root zone, do not let it touch the trunk or any woody roots that might be visible. Site appropriately as pawpaws hate being relocated.



Fertilizing: Many options - Espoma Tree-tone® or Happy Frog® Fruit & Flower applied in the spring are excellent choices. Compost tea is a wonderful snack for your trees in the spring and summer, as is Neptune's Harvest Seaweed Plant Food (Kelp).

Watering: Water newly planted trees immediately after planting, and as needed throughout the growing season. Pawpaw trees require adequate and sometimes significant soil moisture, especially in the first two years after planting. They evolved along streams and river banks where their taproots can easily access the

water table. **Do not allow them to dry out** - they are not drought tolerant.

Organic Spray Schedule: Pawpaws have very few disease and pest issues.

Wildlife: Wildlife may be attracted to the fruit. When fruits are nearly ripe, check them frequently. You can plant enough that there's plenty to share. Alternatively, we do carry netting.

Pawpaws are the sole host for the Zebra Swallowtail Butterfly (*Protographium marcellus*). Their caterpillars have a variable appearance. They don't lay many eggs per tree.



Harvesting: Pawpaws generally bear when they get to around 6', which takes around 5-8 years from seedling to fruiting. Growth is usually slow the first few years as the Pawpaw focuses on growing a good healthy root system. However, grafted varieties may fruit as young as 3 years old. The sweet, custardy flavor of this fruit lends it to fresh eating, ice cream, juices, pies, jams, and in fresh desserts. Eat or use fresh, or refrigerate. They do not have a long shelf life. Fruits can be frozen. Historically, the pulp of the fruit has been used to make a yellow dye. Version 1.1 Feb 21

