

# Pawpaw

## *Asimina triloba*



The pawpaw is the only hardy temperate member of a family of tropical fruit trees. Some people liken the taste of the fruit to a cross between a mango and a banana. The pawpaw is a small tree, usually only about twenty feet tall. A tree usually only has one trunk, but it suckers freely through its roots, forming colonies. The leaves are very large, with a rather rank odor when crushed. It is native to eastern North America. Hardy to zone 5. Folklore claims that John James Audubon used the winter leaf buds for paintbrushes to paint fine detail.

### **Cultivation**

The pawpaw is an understory tree in nature, but grows well as a free-standing tree. It does not like excessively dry areas or heavy clay soils, but is pretty easy to grow otherwise. It does very well as a wood's-edge tree. Curiously, the tree depends on carrion flies for fertilization; one old method of encouraging flower fertilization is to hang a dead animal in the grove when the trees are in bloom.

### **Propagation**

Pawpaw seeds can be direct-sown, either in native soil or in pots. For best results, plant in the fall. These are very easy to grow, but don't be discouraged if they don't emerge early in the spring; they may sprout as late as late June.

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