



The Herb Society of America Promising Plants Profiles

Asimina triloba

Genus: *Asimina*

Specific Epithet: *triloba*

Common Name: pawpaw, American pawpaw

Family: Annonaceae

Flower Color: purple to brown

Form: deciduous tree or shrub

Hardiness Zone: 5-8

Height: 30'

Soil: rich, moist, neutral to acid soil

Sun: full sun to partial shade, but fruit production is best in full sun

Uses: culinary (fruit), medicinal, ornamental, dye, economic



This native North American tree has a range from southern Ontario to New York, south to Florida and Texas, and west to Oklahoma. It is a wonderful addition to any herb garden. Growing to 30 feet tall, it can be either a single trunk specimen or a multi-stemmed tree. If given enough room, it can even form a small thicket. Pawpaws have large ovate-oblong leaves that can grow up to 12 inches long and give the tree a semi-tropical appearance. In the National Herb Garden a pawpaw grows in the corner of the culinary garden and provides shade for other culinary herbs like ginger, violets and turmeric. In autumn the tree transforms its leaves to a bright, clear yellow.

Pawpaw flowers appear in early spring and are inconspicuous to the passing eye, but deserve to be sought out. On second glance they are quite strange - almost otherworldly. They are thick and brown and fascinating to look at, but do not smell them. The smell is foul, but only upon close olfactory inspection, and is an attractant for the flies that pollinate them. Late in the summer the ripe fruit grows 2 to 5 inches long and is bluish green in color. Fruits are ripe and ready to eat after they fall off of the tree and become soft. The skin should be peeled from the fruit, revealing a yellow pulp with a tropical, banana-like taste. Inside the pulp, there are large 1-inch long seeds, which should not be eaten. The fruit can be used to make a fruity spread or to flavor desserts, including ice cream and puddings. Additional information is available from the Pawpaw Foundation at Kentucky State University: www.pawpaw.kysu.edu.

- James Adams, Curator of the National Herb Garden, Promising Plants Presentation, 2003

Photo by James Adams

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