

Fruit & Nut Resources

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Papaya

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Papaya is native to Central America and is grown in tropical and warmer subtropical areas worldwide. It is a large herbaceous plant, usually with a single, straight trunk which can reach to 30 feet. The leaves are large (up to 3 feet in diameter) and deeply lobed, borne on hollow petioles 2 feet or more in length. The older leaves abscise as new leaves emerge, producing a palm-like form to the plant. The flowers and fruit arise from buds on the trunk at the base of the leaves.

Because of its tropical appearance and abundant fruit, papaya is in considerable demand for use in protected landscape settings throughout coastal and southern Texas.

Climate

Papaya thrives best under warm, humid conditions. It is generally intolerant of strong winds and cold weather. Temperatures just below freezing can kill small plants to the ground—larger plants that are not killed outright will normally produce suckers to regenerate the plant and bear fruit within a year.

Limited commercial plantings in the lower Rio Grande Valley rarely survive more than a few years because of freezing temperatures.

Soil and Site Selection

Papayas are adapted to practically any well drained soil. The plant is shallow rooted and will not tolerate excessive wetness or standing water. Raised beds can partly overcome drainage problems.

Although papayas thrive best in full sun, some concession can be made to protection from wind or cold weather. Close to the south or southeast side of the house is the warmest location in most residential sites. Some wind protection provided by other plantings or structures is helpful.