

FGCU Food Forest

Plant Database

Guava (*Psidium guajava*)

Quick Facts

Origin: Southern Mexico and Central America

Description: A small tree to 33 ft high, with smooth, thin, copper-colored bark that flakes off, showing the greenish layer beneath. The fruit, exuding a strong, sweet, musky odor when ripe, may be round, ovoid, or pear-shaped.

Uses: Food, firewood, medicine.

Harvest: The fruit matures 90 to 150 days after flowering. Generally, there are 2 crops per year in southern Puerto Rico; the heaviest, with small fruits, in late summer and early fall; another, with larger fruits, in late winter and early spring.

Flower: The faintly fragrant white flowers are borne singly or in small clusters in the leaf axils and have 4 or 5 white petals which are quickly shed.

Tolerance: The guava thrives in both humid and dry climates. It can survive only a few degrees of frost. It can grow equally well on heavy clay, marl, light sand, gravel bars near streams, or on limestone and tolerates a pH range from 4.5 to 9.4.



General Description: A small tree to 33 ft high, with spreading branches, the guava is easy to recognize because of its smooth, thin, copper-colored bark that flakes off, showing

the greenish layer beneath; and also because of the attractive, "bony" aspect of its trunk which may in time attain a diameter of 10 in. The fruit, exuding a strong, sweet, musky odor when ripe, may be round, ovoid, or pear-shaped, 2 to 4 in long, with 4 or 5 protruding floral remnants (sepals) at the apex; and thin, light-yellow skin, frequently blushed with pink. Next to the skin is a layer of somewhat granular flesh, 1/8 to 1/2 in thick, white, yellowish, light- or dark-pink, or near-red, juicy, acid, subacid, or sweet and flavorful. The central pulp, concolorous or slightly darker in tone, is juicy and normally filled with very hard, yellowish seeds.

- **Native Origin:** The guava has been cultivated and distributed by man, by birds, and sundry 4-footed animals for so long that its place of origin is uncertain, but it is believed to be an area extending from southern Mexico into or through Central America.
- **General History:** Guava was introduced to Florida in 1847 and common by 1886. Early Spanish and Portuguese colonizers were quick to carry it from the New World to the East Indies and Guam. Apparently it did not arrive in Hawaii until the early 1800's. Now it occurs throughout the Pacific islands. Generally, it is a home fruit tree or planted in small groves, except in India where it is a major commercial resource. A guava research and improvement program was launched by the government of Colombia in 1961. In 1968, it was estimated that there were about 10 million wild trees bearing, 88 lbs each per year and that only 10% of the fruit was being utilized in processing. The guava is one of the leading fruits of Mexico where the annual crop from 36,447 acres of seedling trees totals 192,850 tons. Only in recent years has there been a research program designed to evaluate and select superior types for vegetative propagation and large-scale cultivation. In Florida, the first commercial guava planting was established around 1912 in Palma Sola. Others appeared at Punta Gorda and Opalocka. A 40-acre guava grove was planted by Miami Fruit Industries at Indian-town in 1946. There have been more than two dozen guava jelly manufacturers throughout the state. A Sarasota concern was processing 250 bushels of guavas per day and a Pinellas County processor was operating a 150-bushel capacity plant in 1946.
- **Distribution:** It is common throughout all warm areas of tropical America and in the West Indies, the Bahamas, Bermuda and southern Florida. It can also be found in the East Indies, Asia, warm parts of Africa, Egypt, Palestine, the Mediterranean coast of France, India, Hawaii, the Pacific Islands, South America, and Cuba.
- **Season of Harvest:** The fruit matures 90 to 150 days after flowering. Generally, there are 2 crops per year in southern Puerto Rico; the heaviest, with small fruits, in late summer and early fall; another, with larger fruits, in late winter and early spring. In northern India, the main crop ripens in mid-winter and the fruits are of the best quality. A second crop is home in the rainy season but the fruits are less abundant and watery.
- **Uses:** Raw guavas are eaten out-of-hand, but are preferred seeded and served sliced as dessert or in salads. More commonly, the fruit is cooked and cooking eliminates the strong odor. A

standard dessert throughout Latin America and the Spanish-speaking islands of the West Indies is stewed guava shells (*cascos de guayaba*), that is, guava halves with the central seed pulp removed, strained and added to the shells while cooking to enrich the syrup. The canned product is widely sold and the shells can also be quick-frozen. They are often served with cream cheese. Sometimes guavas are canned whole or cut in half without seed removal. Bars of thick, rich guava paste and guava cheese are staple sweets, and guava jelly is almost universally marketed. It is good fuelwood and also a source of charcoal. The bark is used in Central America for tanning hides. The roots, bark, leaves and immature fruits, because of their astringency, are commonly employed to halt gastroenteritis, diarrhea and dysentery, throughout the tropics. Crushed leaves are applied on wounds, ulcers and rheumatic places, and leaves are chewed to relieve toothache. The leaf decoction is taken as a remedy for coughs, throat and chest ailments, gargled to relieve oral ulcers and inflamed gums; and also taken as an emmenagogue and vermifuge, and treatment for leucorrhoea. It has been effective in halting vomiting and diarrhea in cholera patients. It is also applied on skin diseases.

Guava	
Scientific Classification	
Kingdom:	Plantae
(unranked):	Angiosperms
(unranked):	Eudicots
(unranked):	Rosids
Order:	Myrtales
Family:	Myrtaceae
Genus:	<i>Psidium</i>
Species:	<i>P. guajava</i>

Sources

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psidium_guajava

<https://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/morton/guava.html#Climate>

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