

FGCU Food Forest

Plant Database

Papaya (*Carica papaya*)

Quick Facts

Origin: Tropics of the Americas
Description: Tropical fruit tree
Uses: Food source
Harvest: When fruit yellows
Flower: White, fragrant
Tolerance: Not frost tolerant

General Description: Papaya is a short-lived perennial, growing to 30 ft. (9.14 m) high. Its hollow, herbaceous stem is usually unbranched. The deeply lobed, palmate leaves are borne on long, hollow petioles emerging from the stem apex. Older leaves die and fall as the tree grows. Flowers occur in leaf axils. Papaya flowers are fragrant and have five cream-white to yellow-orange petals 1 to 2 in (2.5 to 5.1 cm) long. The stigmatic surfaces are pale green, and the stamens are bright yellow.



- **Fruits:** Papaya fruits are smooth skinned. They vary widely in size and shape, depending on variety and type of plant. Hermaphrodite plants of commercial 'Solo' varieties in Hawaii usually produce fruits that are pear shaped and weigh approximately 12 to 30 oz. (340 to 851 g). Female plants of 'Solo' varieties produce round fruits. Other papaya varieties produce variously shaped fruits, which may weigh up to 20 lb. (9.1 kg). The fruits usually contain many seeds surrounded by a smooth yellow to orange-red flesh that is sweet in good varieties.
- **Flower:** Female flowers are relatively large and rounded at the base. They have a stigma but lack stamens. They generally must receive pollen in order to set fruit. Pollen can be carried by wind or by insects. Male flowers are thin and tubular. They have perfect structure (i.e., they contain both male and female organs), but the small, vestigial ovary is nonfunctional. Male flowers are usually borne on a long flower stalk.

- **Season of Harvest:** Papaya fruit should be harvested after color break - when some yellow shows on the fruit - but before fully yellow (about 9 to 14 months after planting). Fruit for home consumption is best harvested when half yellow. If left to ripen on the tree, the fruit is often damaged by fruit flies and birds.
- **Culinary Uses:** Ripe papaya is usually consumed fresh as a breakfast or dessert fruit; it can also be processed and used in a variety of products such as jams, fruit juices, and ice cream. Papaya is also consumed as a dried fruit. Culled fruits can be fed to pigs and cattle.

Papaya	
Scientific Classification	
Kingdom:	Plantae
(unranked):	Angiosperms
(unranked):	Eudicots
(unranked):	Rosids
Order:	Brassicales
Family:	Caricaceae
Genus:	<i>Carica</i>
Species:	<i>C. papaya</i>

Sources

http://www.extento.hawaii.edu/kbase/crop/crops/i_papa.htm

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Neal, Marie C. (1965). In Gardens of Hawaii. Hawaii: Bishop Museum Press.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papaya>