



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## *Carica papaya*<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

Enormous, simple, lobed leaves combine with a single trunk and delicious fruit to make this a desirable plant for many landscapes (Fig. 1). Flowers are produced along the trunk from the leaf axil. Flowers on male plants are more conspicuous and showy; female flowers are borne close to the stem and usually go unnoticed. Fruit are produced in the leaf axil close to the trunk. The trunk becomes thickened, occasionally growing to 12 inches in diameter. Although older plants can reach 20 feet tall or more, most reach only 15 feet before dying. Plants are short lived but grow quickly.

### General Information

**Scientific name:** *Carica papaya*

**Pronunciation:** KAIR-rick-uh puh-PYE-yuh

**Common name(s):** Papaya

**Family:** *Caricaceae*

**Plant type:** shrub

**USDA hardiness zones:** 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Planting month for zone 9:** year round

**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** specimen; border; accent

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

### Description

**Height:** 10 to 15 feet

**Spread:** 5 to 7 feet

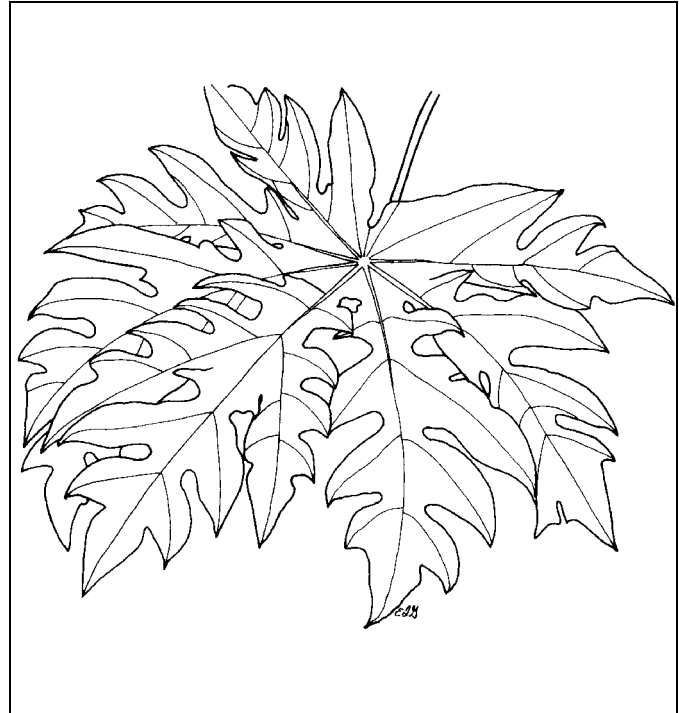


Figure 1. Papaya.

**Plant habit:** upright

**Plant density:** open

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** coarse

**Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Leaf type:** simple  
**Leaf margin:** parted  
**Leaf shape:** star-shaped  
**Leaf venation:** palmate  
**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen  
**Leaf blade length:** 18 to 36 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** no fall color change  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

**Flower color:** yellow  
**Flower characteristic:** winter flowering; spring flowering

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** oval  
**Fruit length:** 6 to 12 inches  
**Fruit cover:** fleshy  
**Fruit color:** orange; yellow  
**Fruit characteristic:** suited for human consumption

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** not particularly showy; usually with one stem/trunk  
**Current year stem/twig color:** green  
**Current year stem/twig thickness:** very thick

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** plant grows in full sun  
**Soil tolerances:** occasionally wet; acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam; clay  
**Drought tolerance:**  
**Soil salt tolerances:** poor  
**Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

**Other**

**Roots:** usually not a problem  
**Winter interest:** no special winter interest  
**Outstanding plant:** plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more  
**Invasive potential:** native plant that often reproduces into nearby landscapes

**Pest resistance:** very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

## **Use and Management**

Most people would plant Papaya for its fruit, but it can make a wonderful, coarse, accent plant in many landscapes. The huge leaves lend a texture that is unmatched by even the most tropical plants. In addition to producing delicious fruit, it adds interest to a shrub border or backyard landscape.

Plant in the full sun for fastest growth and best fruit production. Supply the plant with uniform moisture in the root zone throughout its life, and do not plant in a salty environment. Papaya has naturalized in parts of south Florida as seeds germinate readily.

### **Pests and Diseases**

The papaya whitefly can infest Papaya.