



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

Carica papaya¹

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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

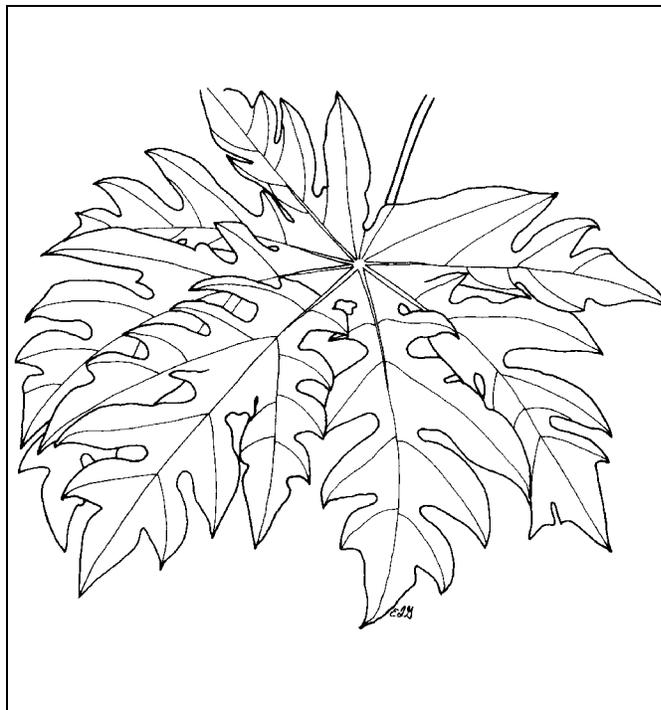


Figure 1. Papaya.

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.