



Asimina triloba Pawpaw¹

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INTRODUCTION

A native deciduous tree, the coarse-textured Pawpaw ultimately reaches 30 feet in height (more commonly 15 to 20 feet) with an equal spread, and creates an upright, wide pyramidal silhouette (Fig. 1). The large, dark green leaves, 6 to 12 inches in length and three to five inches wide, seem to droop from their weight at branch tips, giving the plant a distinctive, almost wilted appearance. Leaves turn a sometimes-brilliant yellow before dropping in the fall. The two-inch-wide purple flowers with the less-than-pleasant perfume appear before the leaves unfurl in springtime, and are followed by the production of unusual, fleshy, three to five-inch-long, round or oval fruits, green when young but ripening to a brown/black, wrinkled texture. When fully ripe, the edible flesh becomes soft, almost custard-like, has a sweet, rich taste similar to bananas, and is surprisingly very nutritious. The fruits are popular with man and wildlife, especially raccoons and birds.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Asimina triloba*

Pronunciation: uh-SIM-min-nuh try-LOE-buh

Common name(s): Pawpaw

Family: *Annonaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 5 through 8 (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Uses: fruit tree; reclamation plant; specimen

Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

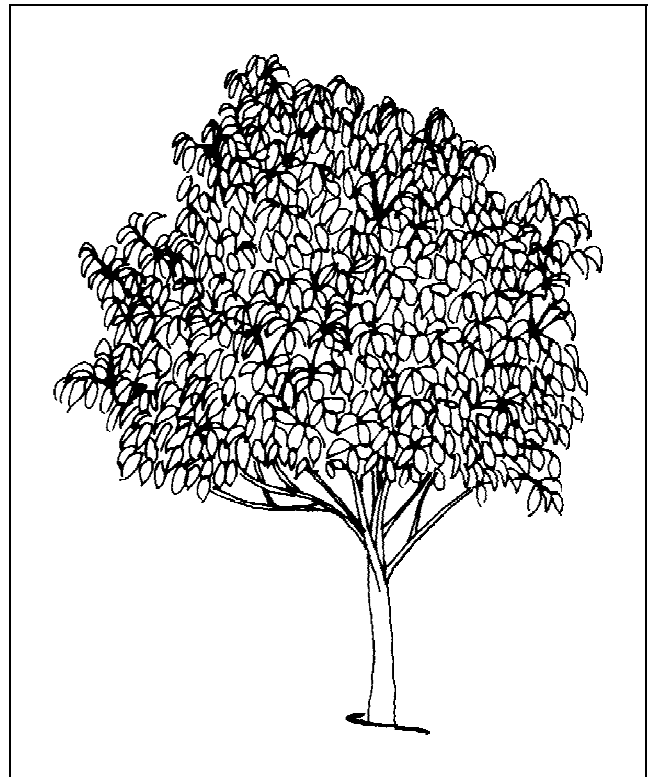


Figure 1. Young Pawpaw.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 15 to 20 feet

Spread: 15 to 20 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

Crown shape: round; upright

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: medium

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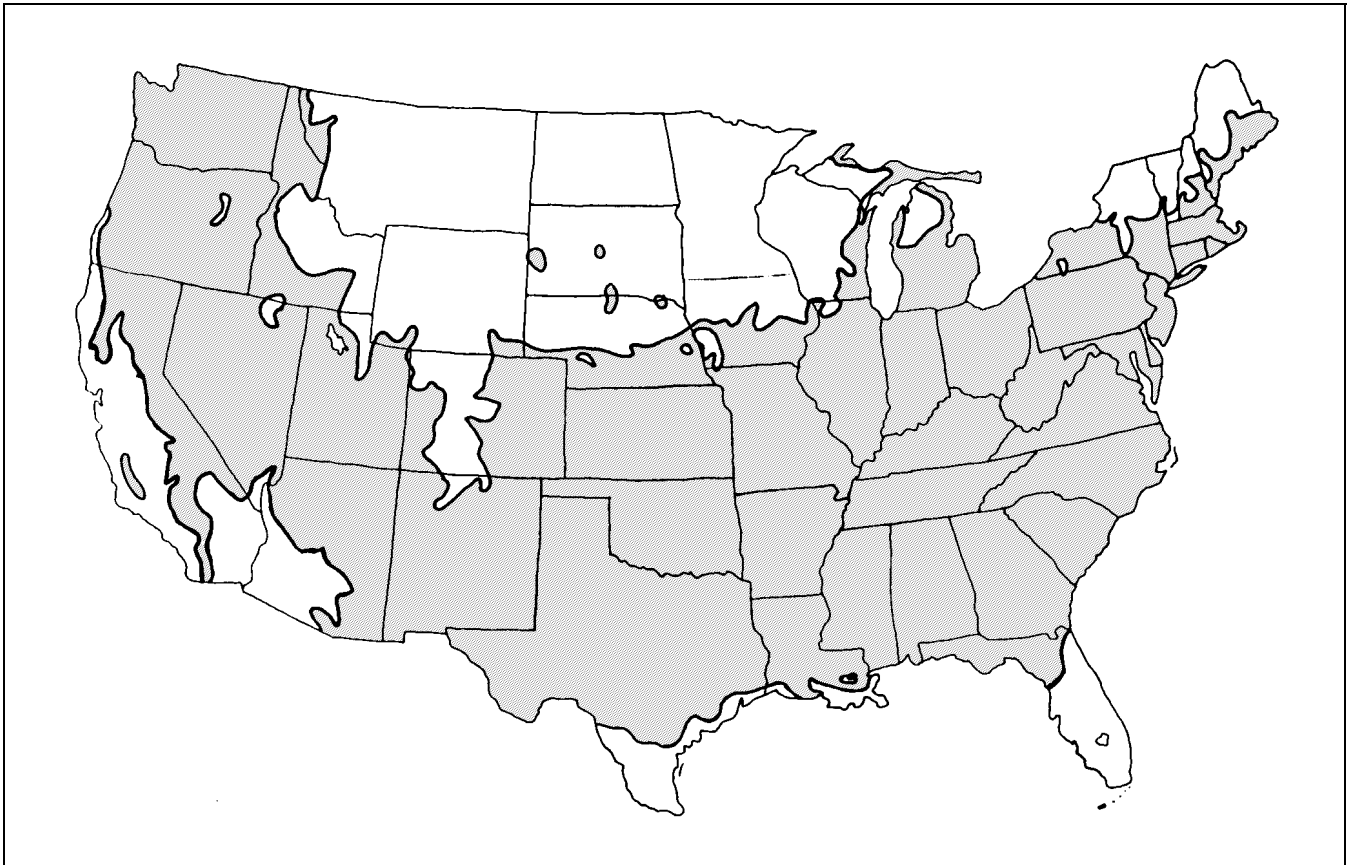


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: oblong; obovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 8 to 12 inches; 4 to 8 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: yellow

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: purple

Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated

Fruit length: 3 to 6 inches

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: black; brown

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; attracts squirrels and other mammals; suited for human consumption; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; no thorns

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown

Current year twig thickness: medium

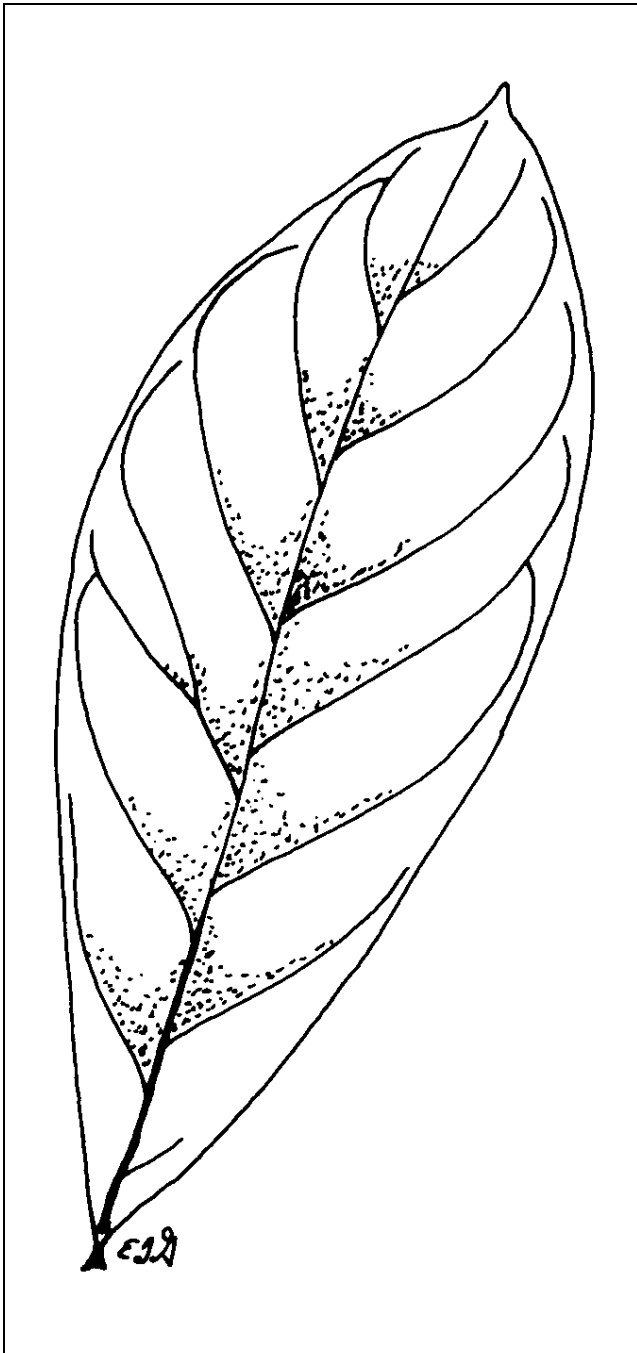


Figure 3. Foliage of Pawpaw.

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun;

tree grows in the shade; tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline;
acidic; occasionally wet; well-drained

Drought tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding tree: tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: not known to be susceptible

Pest resistance: no pests are normally seen on the tree

USE AND MANAGEMENT

The Pawpaw tree will grow in full sun or dense shade but will have denser growth in the sun. Branches arch and reach to the sun in shaded sites often creating an open, irregularly-shaped canopy. The soil should be rich, moist and slightly acid, and the trees will even tolerate wet, soggy soils. It can be found in multi-stemmed thickets along stream banks and on flood plains in the wild. The tree is probably best used in a natural area for stabilizing stream banks and to add yellow fall color to a landscape. It also makes a great coarse-textured specimen.

Propagation is by seeds, layerings, or root cuttings.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.