

# Papaw (*Carica papaya* L)

BY

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(Sinhalese : *Papol.* Tamil : *Papali.*)

**T**HE papaw is native to tropical America from where it was taken to other tropical lands by Spanish and Portuguese sailors. It is a fruit of high nutritive value, being rich in vitamins A and C, calcium and papain, a proteolytic enzyme which aids digestion.

The tree is easily grown in home gardens and provides a regular supply of fresh fruit during the greater part of the year. But varieties which give high yields of papain are grown on a plantation scale solely for papain.

Papaw is very sensitive to water logging and will not stand poor drainage. A prolonged wet spell often results in death of trees on badly drained soils.

It is best grown from seed sown *in situ*. About 3 to 5 seeds are planted in "hills" made by excavating a hole 2 feet square and 1 foot deep, and filling it with good top soil and well rotted cattle manure. The seedlings are thinned out to one female or hermaphrodite tree per hole after they have come into flower. Seedlings could also be raised in plant supply baskets, but care has to be taken against losses by damping off. Transplanting from seed beds is often unsatisfactory as the plants take long to recover from shock.

### VARIETIES

One of the best desert varieties is the Solo introduced by the Horticultural Division from Hawaii in 1940. It produces fruits of both round and pyriform shape, but owing to its tendency to overbear the fruits are inclined to be small. Fruit thinning is necessary with this variety to improve fruit size. Under favourable conditions the fruits colour attractively long before they become ripe. The flesh is relatively firm, very sweet and of exquisite flavour.

Bettina and improved Peterson are two varieties recently introduced from Queensland which are under trial. The former is a dwarf variety producing fairly round smooth fruits 3 to 5 lb. in weight and of attractive colour.

### PLANTING

The trees may be spaced 10 feet to 12 feet apart both ways. They are generally shallow rooted, and being voracious feeders they respond to heavy manuring with organic manures such as well rotted cattle manure or blood meal. Liming is also very beneficial. The trees come into flower in 5 to 6 months from planting, and the fruits ripen in about 12 to 14 months. Seedling progeny of hermaphrodite trees is not all hermaphrodite. The tendency is for  $\frac{2}{3}$ rd of the progeny to be hermaphrodite and  $\frac{1}{3}$ rd female. The progeny of female trees pollinated by pollen from hermaphrodite trees tends to be about  $\frac{1}{2}$  hermaphrodite and  $\frac{1}{2}$  female. With the Solo variety it is best to discard all male trees and plant only hermaphrodite and female trees.

### HARVESTING AND GRADING

Fruits should be harvested when fully mature and carefully packed in single layer trays or baskets padded with wood wool or straw. Bruising causes the fruit to rot. In Queensland the winter fruit is picked green and ripened in humid atmosphere at a temperature of 83° F. Humidity is maintained by boiling a kettle of water over a blue flame burner in a closed chamber.