



PLANT FACT SHEET

Annona squamosa L.

GENUS *Annona* FAMILY Annonaceae

COMMON NAMES Sweetsop

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit

The fruit is eaten raw. It is also used in ice cream.

The juice is used for drinks.

CAUTION: The seeds, leaves and roots are poisonous. Both an alkaloid, and hydrocyanic acid have been shown to occur in these parts of the plant.

DESCRIPTION

A bushy deciduous tree up to 6 m high. It has irregular spreading branches. The leaves are oblong and narrow, often 12 cm long by 4 cm wide. The leaves have fine hairs underneath. The leaves are dull green and smell when crushed. The flowers droop or hang from branches either singly or in groups of 2 or 3. The flowers are greenish colour. The fruit are 8-10 cm across and greenish in colour. The fruit is covered with round fleshy scales which drop off as the fruit ripens. Inside the fruit are several shiny black seeds about 1.5 cm long. The fruit flesh is white and soft.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It suits lowland drier climates. It grows naturally in the dry hills around Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea. The trees will probably grow satisfactorily up to about 1000 metres altitude in equatorial zones. In Colombia it grows between 340-1,300 m above sea level. Sweetsops cannot stand frost but they are able to survive droughts better than many fruit trees. Trees do not like waterlogged soils. Sweetsops can grow on fairly poor, dry, stony soils. In Bolivia they grow in areas with rainfall or 500-1,000 mm per year. It suits hardiness zones 10-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

They are normally grown from seeds and the seeds retain their viability for several years. It is better to grow sweetsops from fresh seeds and it is best to soak seeds for 3 days before sowing. Seeds germinate and start to grow 50 to 70 days after planting. The fruit is borne on old and new wood. As the fruit is more commonly on new wood, pruning is an advantage. Trees can be budded or grafted. A small branch of a selected variety is grafted onto another seedling sweetsop. Plants are very hard to get to grow from cuttings. A spacing of 6 m

apart is suitable for sweetsop trees. The fruit is eaten raw. The sweet soft fleshy layer around the seeds can be eaten raw. When the fruit is ripe it is easy to separate the different soft fleshy parts of the fruit. Often it is easiest and best to harvest the fruit when they are nearly ripe and then let them ripen in a warm place.

Harvesting and Seed Production

The tree is slow growing. Trees can start to produce fruit 2 years after they are planted. A tree can produce 100 fruit. Fruit are often 200-300 g each. The pulp is 20% sugar.

NOTES

There are about 100-150 *Annona* species. Chemicals in the seeds are being investigated as medicine. They have anticancer properties. The bark has chemicals against prostate cancers.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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PROVIDED BY Food Plants International

French, B.R. & Maynard, A.R. Food Plants International Database. Food Plants International

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