

# *Asimina triloba*

## papaw, pawpaw, paw paw, paw-paw



*Asimina triloba* (Papaw, pawpaw, paw paw, paw-paw) comes from the South Eastern USA where it grows in small stands. Associated trees are *Aesculus glabra*, *Gleditsia triacanthos*, *Gymnocladus dioica* and *Nyssa sylvatica*. The pawpaw was described as early as 1541 by Spanish botanist and explorer Hernando de Soto but it is only recently that this tree has gained broader attention because it is frequently planted in food forests. *Asimina triloba* forms a large deciduous shrub or small tree nine to twelve metres tall, often with a single trunk and a dense egg-shaped crown four to six metres wide.

A distinctive feature of the pawpaw is its strongly pendulous leaf which gives the tree a tropical look. The obovate leaf, which is up to thirty centimetres long, emerges bright green and changes to a matt green in summer, and releases a scent when bruised. In the autumn the leaf changes to a stunning golden yellow. *Asimina triloba* blooms from February to May according to the latitude of planting site but always before budding out. Only a low proportion of the small but striking brown bell-shaped flowers develop into fruit. The unique fruits ripen in July to September, are edible and taste of a blend of mango and banana. The bark on juvenile plants is smooth but peels superficially.

*Asimina triloba* is found on wooded slopes, along creeks and in flood plains of rivers on soils that are nutrient-rich and moist where the tree can develop deep roots. In cultivation, this tree has proved its worth on all soil types provided the soil is rich, moist and not too chalky. The pawpaw can tolerate full sun as it matures but as a juvenile the tree is sensitive to full sun and wind owing to its natural habitat in shrub layers in woods, and, therefore, a protected site is preferable. With its tropical appearance, wonderful yellow autumn colour and edible fruits, *Asimina triloba* makes a fine addition to parks, large and small gardens, central reservations and food forests.

### TYPES OF PLANTING

**Tree types:** multi-stemmed trees, solitary shrubs

### USE

**Location:** park, central reservation, large garden, small garden, cemetery | **Pavement:** none | **Planting concepts:** food forest, shade-tolerant

### CHARACTERISTICS

**Crown shape:** egg-shaped | **Crown structure:** dense | **Height:** 9 - 12 m | **Width:** 4 - 6 m | **Winter hardiness zone:** 5B - 10A

### ASPECTS

**Wind:** intolerant to wind | **Soil:** loess, sabulous clay, peaty, heavy clay, light clay, sand, loamy soil, all soils | **Nutrient level:** moderately rich in nutrients, rich in nutrients | **Soil moisture level:** moist, wet | **Light requirements:** sun, partial shade, shade | **pH range:** acidic, neutral | **Host plant/forage plant:** birds, small mammals, humans

### PLANTKENMERKEN

**Flowers:** bell-shaped, pendulous, small, scented | **Flower colour:** brown, brown-violet | **Flowering period:** April - May | **Leaf colour:** green | **Leaves:** deciduous, obovate, big, narrow, pendant, polished, scented with contusion | **Autumn colour:** yellow | **Fruits:** striking, edible, large, frosty, aromatic, berry | **Fruit colour:** yellow-green | **Bark colour:** dark brown | **Bark:** slightly furrowed, smooth | **Twig colour:** olive green | **Twigs:** bare, with lenticels, horizontal branches | **Root system:** extensive, tap root, root suckers,

