

West Indies, Tropical America

Common names: **English:** Soursop.

Ecology: An exotic fruit tree planted throughout the warm tropical lowlands. One of several *Annona*, this species has the largest fruit, 1-4 kg in weight, but normally much less. Introduced to Uganda it is grown in mixed orchards or individually. Most common in Central Region but nowhere planted as a single orchard crop.

Uses: Food (fruit), drink, medicine, ornamental, insecticide, fish poison.

Description: A slender evergreen tree 5-7 m in height, usually less, with a bole which may be 30 cm in diameter, the **branches very low** and wide, giving an open shady crown. In drought conditions it may lose all its leaves. **BARK:** grey with a pattern of shallow grooves. **LEAVES:** alternate, **dark green, shiny** and leathery 8-15 cm long, **oval with a sharp tip**, dull or yellowish below where there are **small pits in vein axils**. Crushed leaves have a strong, unpleasant smell. **FLOWERS:** **solitary and large**, 2-5 cm across, often opposite leaves and hanging down, **3 outer fleshy petals**, curved, almost triangular, **3 inner yellow-green petals**, **thinner** and rounded, edges overlapping. **FRUIT:** kidney or **heart-shaped to 25 cm long**, the leathery dark green skin covered with **soft curved spines**. Inside **woolly white fibrous pulp** covers many large brown-black seeds. The fleshy receptacle and fruit walls are edible and have a distinctive acid-sweet taste. (Single fruits grow together making one "compound" fruit, but the outline of individual fruits can be seen on the skin, each with its own spine. As pollination is often incomplete the fruit may have a distorted shape.)

Propagation: Seedlings (sow seeds in pots), grafting and budding.

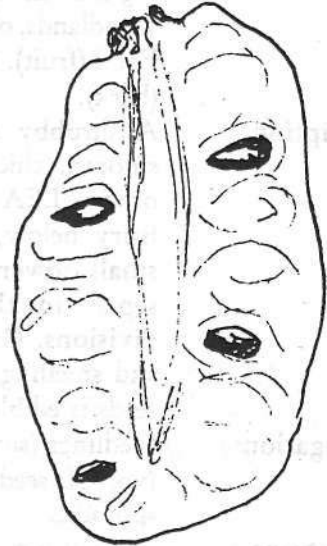
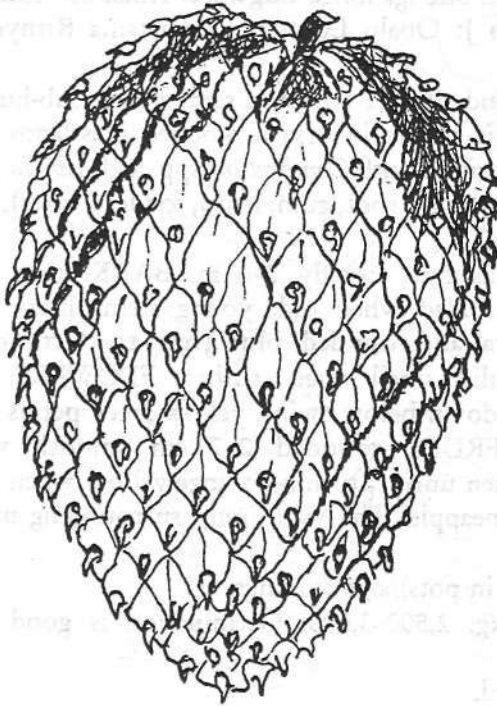
Seed:

treatment: not necessary.

storage: can be stored for several months.

Management: Slow growing. Application of manure may be necessary in the early stages. Mulching will eliminate weeds. Manage crown above 1 m height to encourage branching.

Remarks: This is a desirable tree in home gardens as the delicious fruit can earn good cash and can be used for juice and ice-cream. However, one tree rarely produces more than a dozen fruit, which take 3 months to ripen, and are often attacked by birds such as mouse-birds. All parts have insecticidal properties and can be used to kill fish—a fruit can be used as bait. A powder or oil from the seeds has been used to kill lice and bedbugs. Contact with the eyes causes great irritation. It may be attacked by mealy bugs and scaly insects resulting in a reduction of yield or even complete failure.



A. Birnie