

Tropical America

Common names: **English:** Pawpaw **Luganda:** Papaali **Lusoga:** Mupapaali.

Ecology: A short-lived tree grown throughout the subtropics in Africa, Australia and North America. It does better below 1,500 m in soils that are well drained, fertile and slightly acid (pH 6.0-6.5). It has shallow roots. In some areas it sprouts spontaneously after clearing secondary scrub and old cultivation.

Uses: Food (fruit), drink (fruit), medicine (roots, leaves), pickles, jam (fruit), meat tenderizing (leaves, fruit).

Description: A tree-like herb, 2-10 m, the trunk about 20 cm across, narrowing to a crown of leaves. Stem suckers often develop but branching only when the terminal bud is damaged. The trunk contains soft fibrous wood. **BARK:** pale grey, smooth, **well marked with leaf scars**. **LEAVES:** large, up to 60 cm across, **deeply palmately lobed**, the **hollow stalks to 60 cm long**, swollen at the base. **FLOWERS:** male trees abundant **flowers on drooping stalks**, each cream-yellow, about **2 cm long, tubular**, and fragrant; female trees larger, few flowers beside leaves, **5 thick waxy petals, cream, about 5 cm long**, fragrant with prominent sticky stigma (sometimes male and female together on one tree). **FRUIT:** take about 3 months to mature, oblong to spherical, 7-50 cm x 15 cm, thin skin, green to orange. The sweet edible flesh bears many black seed on the inside leaving the centre hollow.

Propagation: Seedlings, direct sowing on site at predetermined spacing in prepared spots and later thinned out leaving one seedling at each spot. Sow 5-30 seeds together, germination is good, takes 1-4 weeks.

Seed: No. of seed per kg: 20,000. Collected from ripe fruit and air dry.

treatment: not necessary.

storage: should be stored in cool and dry conditions. Viability is up to 3 years.

Management: Frequent weeding is essential and care needs to be taken not to damage the roots of the young pawpaw. In plantations, space plants 2-4 m apart and leave one male tree in an orchard for every 25-100 female trees. Fast growing.

Remarks: Pawpaw is strongly recommended as a household tree for all parts of Uganda below 1,500 m. Meat can be tenderized by wrapping it in pawpaw leaves. Harvest fruit when a yellow colour begins to appear. Trees do well for 3-4 years then yield falls, so plant every 4 years on a fresh site. Pawpaw is attacked by several insects. Leaves used to treat whooping cough.

