



www.sendseedstoafrika.org

Please DO NOT use Genetically Modified Seeds(GM or GMO). Ask your seed provider and if they cannot give you written proof, do not buy the seed.

Try to save your own seed that you know is safe and you will get more money for your vegetables if they are organically grown, which means no pesticide use for the previous 5 years.

Growing papayas (pawpaws)

The fruit of papaya is high in vitamin C. You can also pick the fruit when it is green and cook it like a marrow.

Female and male flowers do not grow on the same tree, so you must have male and female trees in the garden.

Climate

Papayas grow best in hot areas.

They can tolerate mild frost if they are protected from cold winds.

Soil requirements

They can grow in most kinds of soil, but it must be well drained.

The roots can get diseases if the soil stays too wet.

Loamy soils are best.

Planting date

Papayas can be planted at any time of the year, but preferably in late summer.

Spacing

Plant papayas 1,5 metres between plants and 3 to 4 metres between rows.

Growing papayas from seeds

It is easy to grow the ordinary papaya tree from seed.

Wash the seeds from a ripe papaya.

Squeeze the seeds from the jelly bag that covers each seed. The seeds will only grow if you remove the bag.

Dry them in a shady place.

Store in a tightly closed container and keep them until October.

Plant the seeds in October in the black tubes.

Then harden off two weeks before planting in the ground in December or January.

If planting directly into the soil put 5 seeds to a hole. Do not put any compost or manure into the holes.

Keep the small plants moist.

You can only tell which trees are female and which are male when the trees start to flower. Therefore, you should always have more than one tree per hole, because then you can select the female trees.

Female flowers

bigger

closer to the branch than the male flowers

Male flowers

very small

there are many flowers which grow on long branches of the stem.

only female trees give fruit but they need male flowers to pollinate them. Leave 1 male tree for 10 female trees.

Planting

Dig a hole about twice the size of the bag in which the young tree is growing.

Remove the soil from the hole and add some compost and manure. Mix this with some of the soil that has been dug out.

Take the plant out of the container. If it is a plastic container you can use it for two plantings so take it out carefully.

Do not disturb the roots.

Place the tree in the centre of the hole. When you fill up the hole hold the tree so that its base is level with the surrounding ground.

Raise the soil around the tree to dam the water (rain or irrigation).

Do not plant the tree deeper than it was in the container.

Do not cover the stem with soil because it will rot.

Water

Papayas need little water.

They will, however, give more and bigger fruit if they are watered every 2 weeks in the dry season. The flowers will drop if they do not get enough water.

If they are planted in clay soils, make sure that the soil does not stay too wet.

To avoid waterlogging in clay soil, make a ridge and plant the papayas on the ridge.

Fertilisation

Compost or manure

Give the tree:

1 bucketful in September,
1 bucketful in November
another bucketful in January.

Sprinkle a few handfuls of manure evenly around the tree each month from September to the end of March.

NB: Do not apply chicken manure on trees younger than 2 years as it can burn the young papaya trees.



Keep the trees mulched all the time (use grass, leaves, etc).

Do not grow other plants next to the trunk because it is quite soft.

If the trunk is damaged the papaya tree can get diseases.

If the fruit shows humps the tree may be short of boron. Sprinkle 2 tablespoonfuls of borax(try a bit of salt) around the tree.

Pruning and thinning

You can cut the tree (remove top) so that it does not grow too tall. This encourages branching. Cut into winter wood, where leaf scars are close together. Paint the cut with a sealant.

Harvesting

You can pick the fruit when the skin starts to become yellow.

The fruit will ripen after you have picked it.

Handle it carefully because it gets bruised easily.

Diseases

Papaya trees easily get black leafspot. Your nearest agriculture officer or cooperative will be able to tell you how to treat this disease.

When you [plant](#) the seeds, the round ones will grow into female [papaya trees](#) that will bear rounder fruits, while those a tad less roundish will be males or hermaphrodites. Males have flowers but do not bear fruit; I keep some around to insure that my female trees bear fruit. The hermaphrodites can pollinate themselves and bear fruits that are longer in shape.

I interbred wild papayas deliberately with my cultured papaya trees to create trees more resistant to mosaic virus which can infect papaya trees and kill them.

There is another papaya disease that causes the root to rot and the tree to fall after the first harvest, which is very very annoying and frustrating to deal with.

To keep your papaya trees from growing so tall, which is a problem for sure, cut your trees down with a machete at the height you want it at and it will branch out just below where it is cut

3 to 5 feet is where I would cut them. However, I have had a problem with some trees still growing too high, even if I do that. I recommend you do not plant the seeds of the trees that grow too tall because it is a genetic trait. Save and plant the seeds of the trees you cut and then bear fruit low enough to harvest easily. Plant only the seeds from trees whose papayas are the most delicious and which grow to a height you are satisfied with.