

Paw Paw Tree

Asimina triloba

The Paw Paw or Common Paw Paw is a tree native to Pennsylvania, a deciduous understory tree. The species grows in deep shade to full sunlight (best when first planted in partial shade), in moist, nutrient-rich forests and they tolerate occasional wet conditions. Paw Paws prefer good drainage and acidic soil and do well in naturalized, riparian, or woodland areas. They make a good addition to a butterfly, pollinator, or rain garden. Paw paws can grow up to 30 feet tall at a rate of 2 feet per year and 15 to 30 feet wide. Even though Paw Paws are considered deer resistant, keep in mind that seedlings can be a favorite of browsing white-tailed deer and will require a chicken-wire cage for the first several years. See “Follow-Up Care” in paragraph below.

Don’t forget to water the tree well after planting. When mulching around the tree, do not pile mulch right against the trunk. Allow at least 2 inches of bare ground space to prevent decay and only use native plant bark mulch in its natural colors (no dyes added). Dyed wood mulch does not break down to enrich the soil. Instead, it leaches the dye and its contaminants into the soil, harming or even killing beneficial soil bacteria, insects, earthworms, and sometimes the tree itself.

Paw Paw trees can be planted near black walnut trees if you happen to have one on your property. They can tolerate the allelopathic nature of the black walnut tree as the walnut tree’s juglone toxin production attempts to stunt the growth of other trees nearby.

Regarding fertilization of newly planted trees – **DON’T!** For at least the first year, their nutrient needs will be minimal. During the first year, **they are establishing their root systems**, and fertilizer (which stimulates stems and leaves) will not be appropriate. In fact, fertilizer is never really required for these plants unless they are suffering from some disease.

Provide follow-up care. Paw Paw trees like moist soil and should be watered at least once a week during the first year after planting. It can be watered less often during periods of rain but more often during hot, windy weather. Continue watering until late November as lower temperatures require less-frequent watering. Additional controls such as fencing or repellents are recommended for areas with high deer populations. For example, when planting new trees or shrubs you may want to protect them temporarily with small cages taller than the plant to prevent the deer from “tasting” them before they have had a chance to grow. Another way to deter the deer in lieu of cages is deer repellent. Here are two different products that have been proven to be fairly successful:

1. Plantskydd Repellent – a pre-mixed liquid that contains environmentally safe ingredients, and long-term protection when sprayed directly on plants.
2. Deer Stopper – a highly effective but more expensive product that needs to be spray-applied every 30 days. Works by smell and taste, will not wash off, and is pleasant to use, odor free.

Botanical Name	Asimina triloba
Plant Type	Deciduous Tree
Mature Size	15-30 feet tall, 15-30 feet wide
Sun Exposure	Full sun to deep shade (best if first planted in partial shade)
Soil Type	Well-drained, loamy, acidic
Soil Moisture	Dry to moist