



Papaya

(*Carica papaya* Linn.)

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2008

Printed and published by:
Department of Agriculture

Obtainable from:

Resource Centre
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agriculture

Department:
Agriculture
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Background

Origin

The plant originated from tropical America and is considered as

one of most important fruit crops in the Philippines because of its great economic potential.

Climatic and soil requirements

Papaya thrives best in areas with a dry climate (25–30 °C), in humid to fairly humid conditions. It requires ample sunshine and protection from strong winds and it is adapted to a wide range of soils. However, it grows best in well-drained, light-textured soils. Good drainage is important as waterlogging leads to die-off.

Uses

Unripe papaya can be used in mixtures of vegetable stews, salads or pickles. Papaya produces latex, which contains papain—an enzyme that breaks down protein. Papain has been used frequently in the food, pharmaceutical and cosmetic industries. Papain is also included in cleansing lotions, facial creams and toothpastes. An organic compound that can be extracted from ripe papaya seeds reduces fertility among men. Furthermore, a new scientific finding reveals that papaya could be an effective cancer remedy.

Cultural practices

Planting

Sow at least 3 to 4 seeds and cover with fine soil and the seedlings will be ready for transplanting after about 2 months. Prior to planting, stake at a distance of 2,5 x 2,5 cm and dig 45 cm x 45 cm holes. Two seedlings should be planted per hole and later thinned



out to only one after determining the most vigorous plant.

Fertilisation

Fertiliser application should be based on soil analysis.

The following is a general fertiliser recommendation:

- * Nitrogen (N)
- * Phosphate (P_2O_5)
- * Potash K_2O)
- * Magnesium (Mg)

Irrigation

Papaya trees grow best in areas where annual rainfall ranges from 1 200 to 1 500 mm. Irrigation is only necessary during drought periods. Water newly transplanted seedlings daily until these become fully established. Young papaya seedlings should be irrigated once a week and bearing trees every week during dry periods.

Weed control

Weeds should be removed by proper cultivation of the soil around the plants. It is done by hand pulling, hoeing or by shallow cultivation. Extreme care should be exercised in manual weeding around the trees because the plants are shallow-rooted and surface feeder roots may be damaged. Mulch during the dry season to control growth of weeds and to conserve moisture.

Pest and disease control

Eradicate severely infested plants and disinfect tools with a 10 % formalin solution. Spray with recommended fungicide plus a spreader sticker to ensure good spray coverage at 7 to 10 day intervals. Use resistant papaya cultivars.

