

SOURSOP

Guanabana, Huanaba, Corossol

Annona muricata

Annonaceae

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Description

The Soursop is said to have originated from South America and the West Indies.

Uses

Among all *Annona* species, the Soursop is the most tropical, the best for preserving and processing, and produces the largest fruit. The tree is low-branching and shrubby, reaching a height of approximately 8-10 m (25-30 ft). The seeds and leaves have toxic properties and, when crushed are effective against head lice, southern army worms, and pea aphids. The fruit has been placed in fish traps as bait. The wood may have potential as a source for paper pulp and can be used to make ox yokes because it does not cause hair loss on the neck of the oxen.

Common Names

- Spanish
 - Guanábana
 - Anona De México

Cultivation

- Elevation: sea-level to 1,200 m (3,500 ft).
- Germination: Direct-seeded or soaked 24 hours; should germinate in 15-30 days
- Soil: prefers a rich, well-drained soil, but it can be grown in acid and sandy soil
- Temperature: cold-sensitive and will suffer injury in a light frost.

Soursop is usually propagated by seed and should produce fruit in 3-5 years. It needs plenty of sun and cannot withstand strong winds. When grafting, it is best to use Soursop seedlings, although grafting on to custard apple, mountain soursop, or pond apple is usually successful.

Harvesting and Seed Production

The Soursop flowers more or less continuously but in every growing region there is one principal harvest period. The fruit is picked when full grown and still firm but slightly yellow-green. If allowed to soften on the tree, it will fall to the ground and splatter. The Soursop is a sparse bearer; usually bearing 12 to 20 fruits per tree.

Pests and Diseases

Soursop is attacked by a variety of pests depending on the region where it is located. Mealybugs may occur in masses on the fruit, while scale and lacewings may infest the tree. The fruit may be attacked by fruit flies, and red spider mites can be a problem in dry climates. Also be on the alert for defoliator caterpillars and for anthracnose disease on the fruits.

Cooking and Nutrition

The fruit is classified variously as sweet, sub-acid, or acid. Fruits are best eaten 5 to 6 days after harvest. You can cut the fruit into sections and eat the flesh with a spoon, add it to fruit salad, or serve it with sugar and a little milk. The most common use for this fruit in the tropics, however, is as a processed drink. According to Julia Morton's *Fruits of Warm Climates*, to prepare this beverage, the seeded pulp is pressed in a colander to extract the rich, creamy juice, which is then beaten with milk or water and sweetened. Or one can blend the seeded pulp with an equal amount of boiling water, strain it, and then sweeten to taste. Be careful to remove all seeds before blending the pulp as they are toxic and should not be eaten in any quantity. A Soursop custard is made in the Dominican Republic by cooking Soursop pulp in a sugar syrup with cinnamon and lemon peel. Soursop ice cream is also popular; simply mash the pulp in water, let it stand, then strain to remove fibers and seeds. Then blend the liquid with sweetened condensed milk, pour it into ice cube trays, and stir several times while it freezes. Immature Soursops can be roasted, fried, cooked as vegetables, or used in soup.

References

Morton, J. 1987. Soursop. p. 75-80. In: *Fruits of warm climates*. Julia F. Morton, Miami, FL.

<http://ecocrop.fao.org/ecocrop/srv/en/cropView?id=411>