

CATTLEY GUAVA

Purple Guava, Calcutta Guava, Strawberry Guava, Chinese Guava

Psidium cattleianum

Myrtaceae

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Origin

The Cattlely Guava is thought to be native to the lowlands of eastern Brazil. This species has two forms, the Red Strawberry Guava (*P. cattleianum*) and the Yellow Cattlely Guava (*P. cattleianum* var. *luridum*). This species was named after William Cattlely, the English horticulturist who fostered its cultivation in England in the early 1800s.

Uses

The pulp of the cattlely guava is frequently eaten fresh out of hand, but it is also well known as a source of fine jams and jellies. The tree is often used in landscaping as an attractive, edible hedge.

Cultivation

Cattlely Guavas are a fairly slow-growing small to medium shrubs or trees. Red Strawberry Guava tends to be a compact, bushy shrub, reaching average heights of 2-4 m (6.5-14 ft), while the yellow-fruited variety has a more upright and open growth habit and may attain 12 m (40 ft). Both varieties have somewhat glossy, leathery leaves with small, white fragrant flowers that have an unusually attractive shape.

This species is the hardiest member of the guava family; it can tolerate freezing temperatures as low as -5.5° C (22° F) without damage and even lower temperatures for brief periods with minimal damage. Cattlelys can tolerate some flooding, drought, and even salt. This guava species does well in limestone and poor soils that would barely support other fruit trees. Mulching and irrigation will improve plant growth and fruit yields on low moisture sites. Propagation is most often by seed which normally produces true-to-type. Grafting is difficult because of guava's thin bark. Cattlelys can tolerate freezing temperatures as low as -5.5° C (22° F) without damage and even lower temperatures for brief periods with minimal damage.

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Harvesting and Seed Production

In seasonal subtropical climates like that found in southern Florida, cattlelys ripen mainly in June–August with a smaller crop in November–January. Handle fruits carefully as they can produce a deep brown stain on clothing. Cattlely Guavas tend to be fairly seedy, though there are some nearly seedless cultivars.

Pests and Diseases

Cattlelys have very few disease and pest problems. Cattlely Guavas occasionally are subject to thrip infestations.

Cooking and Nutrition

The fruit has a sweet acid, strawberry-like flavor without the muskiness of the common guava. The yellow fruits tend to be a bit more bland. The fruit usually is eaten out of hand, without preparation, but can also be made into an excellent puree, beverage base, punch, syrup, and even wine. According to *Fruits of Warm Climates* by Julia F. Morton, a delicious puree can be made by cooking 6 parts red cattlelys (remove calyces from the fruit first) with 1 part water and 2 parts granulated sugar and pressing through a sieve. The nutritional value of the fruit is limited mainly to some niacine and large amounts of ascorbic acid.

References

Morton, J. 1987. Cattlely Guava. p. 363–364. In: *Fruits of warm climates*. Julia F. Morton, Miami, FL.

<http://ecocrop.fao.org/ecocrop/srv/en/cropView?id=1803>