

SAPODILLA

Chicle, Naseberry

Manilkara zapota

Sapotaceae

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Description

The Sapodilla is a fairly slow-growing, upright tree to 18 m (60 ft) or more in height. It is strong and wind-resistant, rich in white, gummy latex. Its leaves are alternate and evergreen, arranging themselves at the tops of each branch. The fruit may be nearly round, oval, or conical in shape. When immature it is hard, gummy and very astringent due to a high concentration of latex.

Uses

Usually fruits are eaten by cutting the fruit in half and enjoying by scooping out the flesh with a spoon. Caution must be taken not to eat the seeds. It has been used historically as deserts or fillings to pies and other baked goods. It has also been preserved as wine and jams. Drying the fruit has been known to preserve it for several months as well. Gum is occasionally made from the latex sap.

Common Names

- Spanish
 - Zapotillo
 - Chico Zapote

Cultivation

Seedlings should be kept in full sun, with adequate moisture and fertilizer or compost. Trees set out in commercial groves are spaced 9-14 m (30 to 45 ft) apart each way. Most mature trees receive no watering regiment, but irrigation during dry times will maintain productivity. Native to limestone soils, higher pH water is sometimes used to reduce vegetative growth and promote fruiting. The Sapodilla grows from sea level to 9,186 ft (2,800 m) as is common around Quito, Ecuador. The tree is not strictly tropical, as mature trees can withstand temperatures of 26° to 28° F (-3.33° to -2.2° C) for several hours. The Sapodilla seems equally at home in humid and relatively dry atmospheres.

Harvesting and Seed Production

If scratching the fruit surface reveals brown instead of green, then the fruit is ready to be picked and will ripen off the tree. Immature fruit will not ripen off the tree. Often, ripe fruit are easily obtained after naturally falling off the tree. The flesh ranges in color from yellow to dark brown, and has a sweet flavor resembling that of brown sugar and pear. Most fruits will have 1 to 12 seeds inside, but these are easily removed for eating. The dark seeds can be collected and kept for several years if kept dry. The seeds are dark brown or black, with one white hilum extending on one side. They are usually flat with a distinct curved hook on one margin; and about 2 cm (0.25 in) long. Grafting is necessary to achieve trees that will come true to a variety.

Pests and Diseases

In general, the Sapodilla tree remains supremely healthy with little or no care. Certain insects have been known to attack new growth, but usually cause no significant commercial damage.

Cooking and Nutrition

Seeds should never be eaten due to toxic chemicals. More than 5 or 6 seeds ingested will cause abdominal pain and vomiting. Fruits are high in tannins which have an anti-bacterial and anti-parasitic value. They are high in potassium, copper, iron, and vitamin. They have 83 cal/100g of fruit.

References

[Food Plants International](#)