

AMERICAN PAWPAP

Latin: *Asimina triloba*

Common name: American Pawpaw, Papaw

SEASONALITY

Weather can change the harvest time, but in most areas, August, September, and October are key times. If you see the classic bright yellow fall foliage of pawpaw, then sadly you have missed the fruit, since it often is ripe before leaf color changes. Mid-August is a prime time for North Carolina, and it can be earlier in the Deep South but later into fall for more northern climes.



The pawpaw is native to the *Eastern, Southern, and Midwestern United States*, specifically spanning from New York west to Southeastern Nebraska, and as far south as Southern Florida and as far North as Montreal.



WHAT IS IT?

American Pawpaw is the largest tree fruit in North America. In the wild, the pawpaw is usually an understory tree, but again trees will bear more fruit if they are on the forest edge with accessible sunlight. The pawpaw needs forest protection, for when young it despises wind.



WHEN TO HARVEST

A crux rule with pawpaws is that they are hard to see, since they match the droopy green leaves of the tree so well. If you see one or two on the ground, that is a sure hint that harvest is ready. A gentle tap of the often small tree trunk will often shake down fruit that you can collect.



PICKING THE GOOD ONES

Ripe pawpaws will indent with gentle pressure, like an avocado. DO NOT eat hard pawpaws, since unripe ones can lead to stomach upset. Like mulberries, pawpaws attract many other animals with urine and feces so avoid ground drops.



PROCESSING

Like persimmons, the end goal is usable or freezable pulp, separated from seeds and with little skin.

1 Start with your batch of indent-able pawpaws, and freeze all of them without any prep for about 12 hours, then remove from the freezer and let thaw for about 20 minutes.

2 Take the semi-thawed pawpaws and peel the green skin with a peeler, like a potato.

3 Then take the yellow hunk of semifrozen pulp, and pry it open. This lets you easily pop out the seeds cleanly without adhering pulp.

4 You can now freeze the pulp for later recipe use.

AMERICAN PERSIMMON

Latin: *Diospyros virginiana*

Common name: American Persimmon, Date Plum, Eastern Persimmon

WINTER FRUITS

“Many elders laud persimmons again for being human fruit at a time when mainly nuts are being collected. Any fresh fruit that can be harvested in December holds reverence among tribal members. We are taught that if we watch and listen that Nature will provide, and provide she does with fall persimmons.” - Linwood Watson

There are many sub-varieties, or cultivars that occur in wild American persimmons. And this ripening variation can occur even in the same location. There is a basic dichotomy though. There is a northern variant of the American persimmon.

It tends to reliably fruit every year without skipping years. It tends to fruit in late summer to mid-fall. However, there is also a southern variant of the American persimmon. It can occasionally skip a year or years, but when it does produce, it can cover the ground in persimmons, and that covering could occur in late fall to early winter.



WHAT IS IT?

American Persimmon is a deciduous tree that grows in woodland areas of the eastern and southeastern United States. It produces fragrant flowers and round fruit, with thick, leathery, orangish-yellow skin. Leaves are lanceolate in shape and alternately arranged on the stem.



AVOID ASTRINGENCY

The key issue here in picking is picking non-astringent persimmons. Astringency is not a taste. It is a physical sensation where your tongue puckers from the unripe persimmon. To further avoid astringent persimmons, place your picks in a paper bag and let them ripen further in the refrigerator for 3-5 days.



PICKING THE GOOD ONES

The basic mantra of persimmon ripeness is that the “uglier the better.” If you fear picking up a mushy persimmon for accidentally tearing it apart, then you know you have a good one. Once you see a ripe one, try to check on the ground around the tree every day. Most trees with good sun may shed fruit every 2-3 weeks.

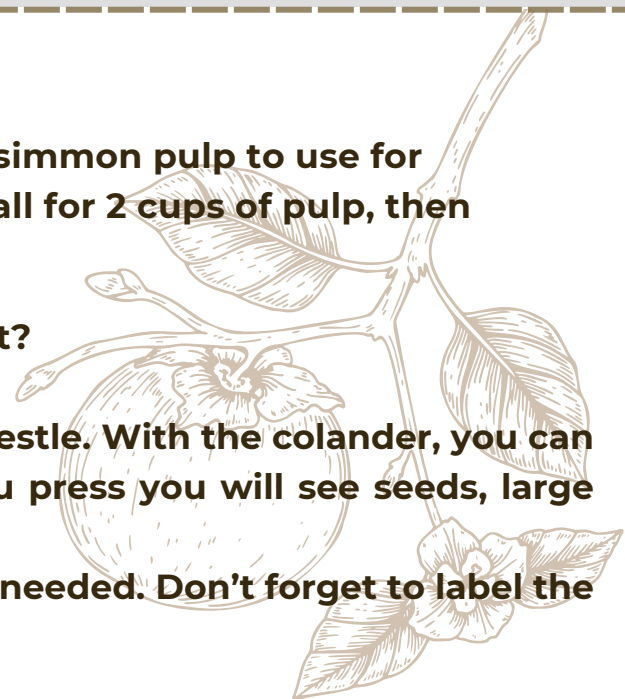


PRESERVATION

It is good to keep the end goal in mind here. The end goal is loads of orange-red persimmon pulp to use for recipes or to freeze later for recipes. Keep in mind what your recipe needs - if they call for 2 cups of pulp, then freeze in 2-cup freezer bag increments so you can just thaw out what you need.

So, you have a paper bag of mushy persimmons, and you cold rinsed them, now what?

- Cut off the woody stem (the calyx).
- Then place a handful of the persimmons in a large pore colander or a ricer with a pestle. With the colander, you can press by hand, or with the ricer you can mash with the pestle. Regardless, as you press you will see seeds, large chunks of skin, and clean persimmon pulp left in your collecting bowl.
- Keep mashing until you get the base amount for your recipe, and then freeze until needed. Don't forget to label the freezer bag with the date.



DOGFENNEL

Latin: *Eupatorium capillifolium*
Common name: Dogfennel

**ONLY EAT
in small
AMOUNTS**

Dogfennel contains pyrrolizidine alkaloids, which are known to cause liver damage.



STEMS

Dogfennel is a perennial herb in the sunflower family. It can grow up to 6' tall and prefers sunny areas.



LEAVES

Leaves are finely dissected and resemble bright green threads. When crushed, the foliage has a strong turpentine-like smell.



FLOWERS

In early fall from September through November, the tiny daisy-like white flowers are replaced by small red berries. As the fruits age, the seeds develop hairs, like those of dandelions, allowing dispersal by the wind.

Eupatorium capillifolium, or dogfennel, is a North American perennial herbaceous plant in the family Asteraceae, native to the eastern and south-central United States.



HARVEST

- Dogfennel has a flavor similar to cultivated fennel, with notes of mugwort (a related plant) and sage.
- Harvest the tender leaves any time of year, but the flavor is best in early to mid-summer before the plant goes to flower.
- Dogfennel contains pyrrolizidine alkaloids, which are known to cause liver damage, especially in large amounts. Care must be taken to dry and cook dogfennel thoroughly, and even then, only small amounts should be eaten.

LAMB'S QUARTERS

Latin: *Chenopodium album*

Common name: Lamb's Quarters, Goosefoot, Pigweed

MAJOR MEDICINAL BENEFITS:

- Anti-inflammatory compounds
- Phytonutrients
- High in fiber and protein
- Vitamin A
- Vitamin C

Lamb's Quarters grow in disturbed areas such as parking lots, roadsides, and other cultivated land. They require dry soil and can grow in sunny to shady conditions. They are native throughout most of North America.



STEMS

Lamb's Quarters is a non-woody plant that may have a few or several bunches above the base. They can be anywhere in color from red to purple and can even be striped.



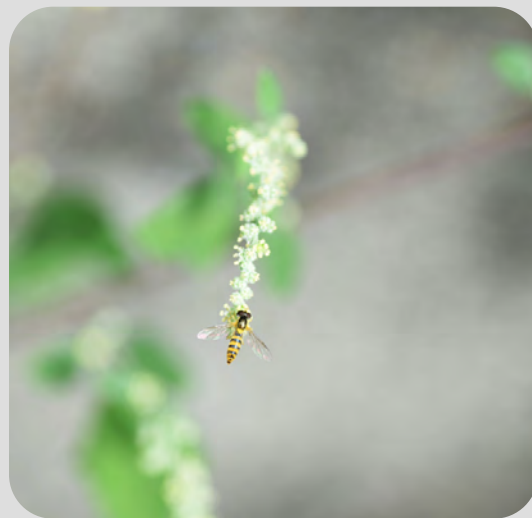
LEAVES

Lamb's quarters is a herbaceous annual plant with triangular to lance-shaped leaves that are arranged alternately on the stem, and can sometimes be covered in a whitish powder.



FLOWERS

Each plant can grow over 4' and produce very small greenish-white flowers and tiny, brown seeds that resemble quinoa, which is a close relative.



CULINARY USES

The entire plant is edible and can be consumed fresh, dried, or cooked (similar to spinach), and is used in everything from soups and stews to stir-fries and salads. Lamb's quarters are closely related to quinoa, which is an extremely popular edible seed, which is native to North America and is now eaten all over the world. Lamb's quarter seeds are much smaller but equally edible and delicious.



MUSCADINE GRAPES

Latin: *Vitis rotundifolia*

Common name: Muscadine grape, Scuppernong Grape, Southern Fox Grape, Swamp Grape

MAJOR USES:

- Jams
- Jellies
- Berry Sauces
- Grape Dumplings
- Pickled Leaves
- Stuffed Leaves
- Winemaking

Muscadine grapes are the very first cultivated grape species in *North America*. This species of wild grape prefers moist, shady woodland and its native range spans most of the *East Coast*, all states along the *Gulf Coast* and into *East Texas*.



VINES

Muscadine Grapes are a perennial vine with large, glossy leaves, which are arranged alternately on the stem. They produce dark purple fruit borne in clusters.



LEAVES

Not only are muscadine grapes edible and delicious, but the leaves are edible too. Use them to make stuffed grape leaves, or simply cut them up for a salad. Grape leaves are edible raw or cooked. Adding a grape leaf to your pickles will keep them crisp by releasing tart and drying tannins.



CULTIVATION

The vines are dioecious, which means there are male and female plants. Therefore, if you wish to cultivate muscadine grapes, you need to make sure you have both male and female vines present.



OTHER BENEFITS

Muscadine grapes are very easy to grow, as they are drought and pest-tolerant. They also have the highest polyphenol content of any grape variety. Polyphenols are an antioxidant plant compound that defend human cells against ultraviolet radiation and various pathogens. They're also high in potassium and Vitamin C.

THICK SKIN

Muscadine grapes have the thickest skin of any grape in the world!

PASSIONFRUIT

Latin: *Passiflora incarnata*

Common name: Passionfruit, Maypop, Passionflower

MAJOR USES:

- Remedy for anxiety & depression
- Relief of substance abuse withdrawal symptoms
- Teas & tonics

This species of Passionfruit is native to the *Southeastern United States*, specifically from *Texas to Florida*. There are many other variations of this species that have a broader range across the United States.



VINES

Purple Passion flower is an herbaceous, perennial vine that can grow up to 25 ft. long. The plant climbs with axillary tendrils or sprawls along the ground and spreads by root suckers.



LEAVES

Leaves are deciduous and arranged alternately on the stem and have three to (rarely) five lobes.



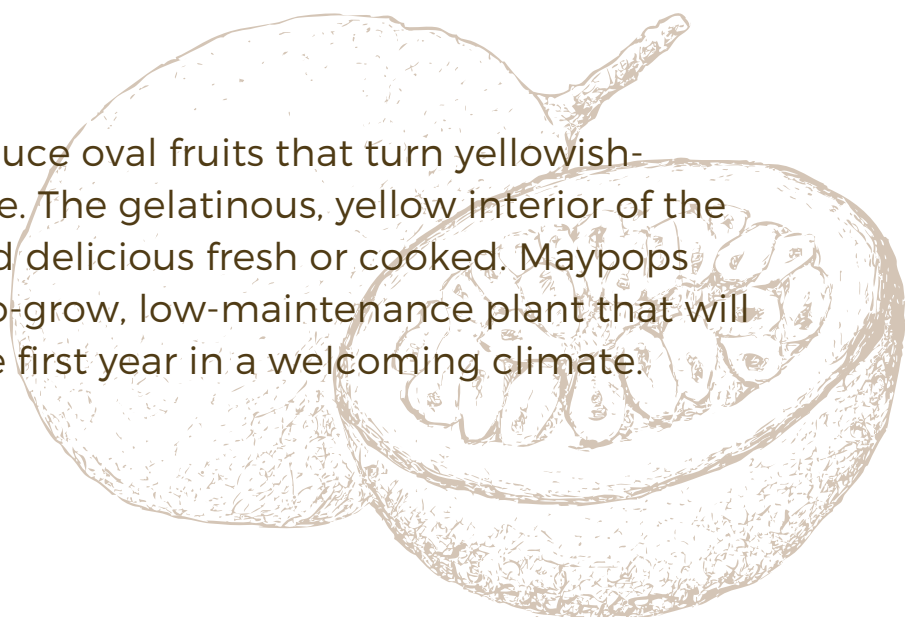
FLOWERS

The flowers are showy, lavender flowers about 3 inches in diameter, and are short-stalked from leaf axles. The petals and sepals subtend a fringe of wavy or crimped, hair-like segments. The pistil and stamens are also flamboyant.



FRUITS

These vines produce oval fruits that turn yellowish-orange when ripe. The gelatinous, yellow interior of the fruit is edible and delicious fresh or cooked. Maypops are a very easy-to-grow, low-maintenance plant that will produce fruit the first year in a welcoming climate.



A WORLD OF COLOR

There are many other species of passionflower vine, with colors ranging from white to bright red and pink.

POKEWEED

Latin: *Phytolacca americana*

Common name: Pokeweed, Poke, Poke Sallet

DO NOT
Eat
BERRIES

Pokeberries contain oxalic acid and a saponin called phytolaccotoxin



Pokeweed is a perennial herb that grows widely across *Eastern and Southern North America*, spanning as far west as Nebraska, Kansas, and Western Texas. It skips over the Rocky Mountain Range and can also be found on the *West Coast*.



STEMS

Pokeweed can reach heights of up to eight feet with thick, purple to bright pink stems and branches arising from a large white taproot. The stems are partially hollow but can be anywhere from rigid to flexible, but not very strong.



LEAVES

Pokeweed has dark green, lance-shaped foliage that is typically between 7 1/2 to 14 1/2 inches long. They alternate on the stems and have a somewhat acrid smell when crushed.



BERRIES

Pokeweed produces dark purple berries borne on racemes. Pokeweed is widely considered toxic unless it is cooked properly, and **the berries are always poisonous**, so exercise caution.



HARVEST

- Harvest young leaves only; do not harvest leaves if leaf stems have turned red and the red begins to extend into the petiole.
- To encourage the plant to produce more of the younger, edible leaves, pick older leaves from the stem and harvest the regrowth in about two weeks.
- Pokeweed leaves must be blanched before consuming, and it's widely recommended to blanch at least twice, but more can be necessary as the leaves age.

POOR MAN'S PEPPER

Latin: *Lepidium virginicum*

Common name: Poor Man's Pepper, Peppergrass

MAJOR MEDICINAL BENEFITS:

- Treat dysentery and diarrhea
- Vitamin C
- Fight Infection



Poor Mans Peppergrass is native to **much of North America**, including most of the United States and Mexico and southern regions of Canada, as well as most of Central America.



STEMS

The small leaves are linear in shape, but get wider towards the base of the plant, which grows up to 8" tall in a variety of habitats from moist shady areas to drier disturbed sites.



LEAVES

"Lepidium" means "fish scale" in Latin, referring to the flat, round, seed pods, which are present on the top of the plant in bottlebrush-like racemes.



FLOWERS

Poor man's Peppergrass is a herbaceous annual member of the mustard family and provides a familiar, horseradish heat. Flowers are tiny and white with 4 petals.



HARVEST

- Harvest the leaves in early summer, when the plant produces a green rosette of deeply lobed basal leaves. Later, you may harvest the smaller leaves and flowers, but the stems get tough quickly, so you might wish to strip the leaves and flowers off the stems before consuming. Seeds are ready in late summer. To harvest the seeds, strip the pods from the stems. Seeds can be used in place of black pepper, but also provide a sharper wasabi-like bite. Sprinkle on everything from salads to tuna sashimi, or add them to soups and stews.

RED MULBERRY

Latin: *Morus rubra*

Common name: Red Mulberry

THE GIVING TREE

“One other traditional lesson that mulberries espouse. Elders adhere to “not being greedy with the harvest.” Take what you can easily attain that day. Take what you can use. But keep in mind, that the world does not rotate around you. There are other food webs that you need to respect even if you are unaware of them so leave some for other animals. When I see fruit just out of reach, I move to a lower limb. The mockingbird needs some. The robins need some. The squirrels need some.”

-Linwood Watson

A mulberry tree with solid sunlight (over 8 hours a day) can fruit profusely from mid-May to early July (6-8 weeks!). Since many wild *Morus rubra* specimens prefer more shady areas and shrubby habitats, the harvest may be more brief, because the less sunlight (energy), the less fruit. Regardless, a base rule is to keep your eyes out in early summer.



HOW TO PICK: STEP 1

Mulberries are soft and need to be delicately handled, which is why they are not routinely in grocery stores. When you see a few berries spontaneously falling to the ground, it is time to harvest.



HOW TO PICK: STEP 2

Place a water-shedding tarp, like a tarp for covering firewood, underneath part of a tree. A typically sold 20 by 40-foot tarp can cover half the under canopy of even a large mulberry tree. The old advice to use an old bed sheet is impractical since it quickly becomes soiled with fruit juice, soil, or animal scat.



HOW TO PICK: STEP 3

Use a long pole or bamboo stick to gently tap the mulberry limbs and all the fruit that easily shakes off is usually ripe and ready to harvest. Use shallow boxes to collect the mulberries, since if you stack them over 3-4 inches you will start to crush the ones on the bottom.



PRESERVATION

Mulberries are soft and delicate, so refrigerate until you can use them. **JUST BEFORE** you use them, use a colander to thoroughly rinse with cold water. Mulberries have many nooks and crannies (called drupelets) and many animals- winged, 2-legged, and 4-legged, and even the 6-legged insects, touch them. As such, a good thorough rinse before processing is crucial. Note if you rinse just after harvest and then place them in the fridge, all the berries will mold.

After this cold rinse, you can eat them fresh, or you can dab them/lie them on a paper towel and then dry them in a dehydrator. If you have plans for later jam or a cobbler, you can mash the berries with a potato masher by hand, or partially puree them in a food processor, and store them in a ziploc bag in a freezer, If you want to freeze mulberry pulp for later jam making, do not “over liquify” the pulp since the jam recipe usually correlates to gentle hand-mashing, not machine processing. One other reminder is that if you puree just enough, like 1-3 pulses, you will not liquify the berries but you will dissolve (or at least render invisible) the stems, and many times this semi-liquid puree is perfect for kids who are squeamish about the stem. These frozen mulberry pulp bags can be used anytime in the next 12-18 months.


WILD BERGAMOT

Latin: *Monarda fistulosa*

Common name: Wild Bergamot, Bee Balm, Horse Mint

MAJOR MEDICINAL USES:

- Antimicrobial teas
- Remedy for upset stomach and nausea
- Soothe sore throat
- Reducing fever
- Treatment for infection



Wild Bergamot is a showy, herbaceous, perennial plant in the mint family. Wild bergamot grows in a variety of habitats, from full sun to partial shade, and can flower from Late June to September.



STEMS

As a part of the mint family, wild bergamot leaves are opposite one another and their stems are square.



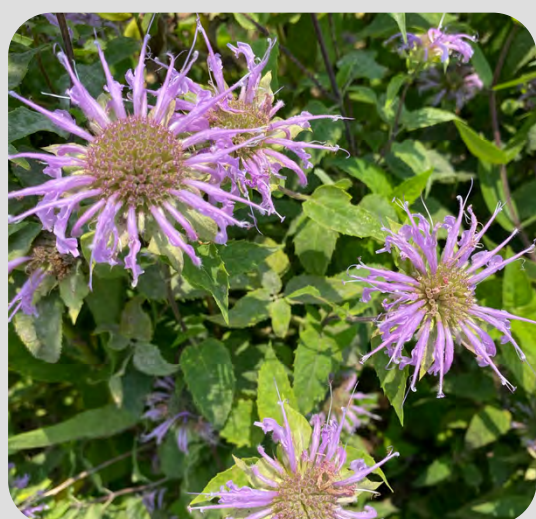
LEAVES

Wild bergamot always has a strong scent that can vary from floral to strongly herbal, and is often used in place of thyme and oregano. As such, it is often used in savory dishes in place of oregano.

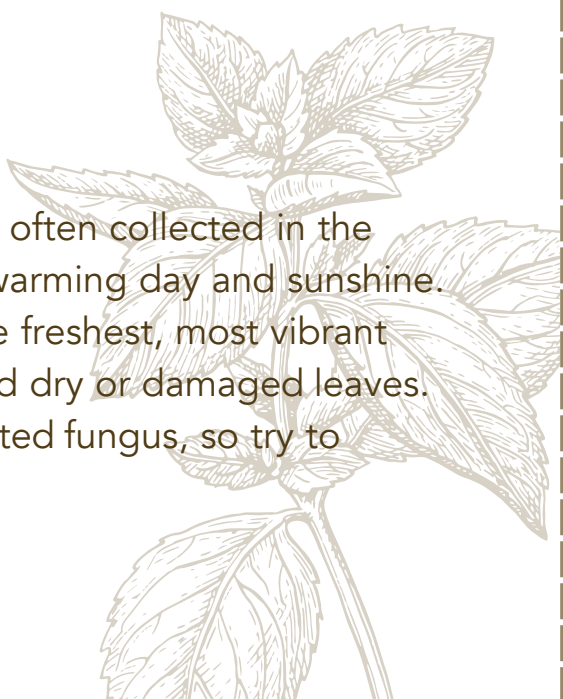


POLLINATORS

Wild bergamot attracts a number of specialist bees, bumble bees, wasps, hummingbirds, butterflies, and moths.



HARVESTING



Wild Bergamot flowers and their leaves are often collected in the early morning before they lose oils to the warming day and sunshine. This allows maximal flavor. With leaves, the freshest, most vibrant green leaves are often the most tasty. Avoid dry or damaged leaves. Bergamot leaves are prone to splotchy/dotted fungus, so try to harvest the most uniformly green leaves.

STORAGE

The leaves can be dried for later use in teas. Store these dried leaves in a cool, dry place.

