

The Feijoa's Ideal for Home Planting

A True Ornamental, It Produces a
Fruit that is Acceptable
in Any Household

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A recent issue of Southland Homes and Gardens mentioned the feijoa, or pineapple guava, as a very desirable hedge plant. In addition to being very well suited for this purpose, it will prove satisfactory in other ways in home gardens.

Subtropical fruits are not necessarily "better eating" than others, but there is a "kick," particularly for those of us who were raised in the East, about growing such things. The feijoa is quite hardy, has excellent ornamental value and will produce large crops of delicious fruit, things calculated to give it a place in any home planting. In a limited way, too, it offers commercial possibilities.

A native of South America, the feijoa was brought into Southern California in the early part of this century. It is quite closely related to the guavas, differing somewhat in the shape of the ovary and the structure of the stem. The flesh of the fruit is thick, pulpy and juicy, and has a sweet taste, suggesting pineapples and strawberries. A delightful aroma is exhaled by the fruit even before it reaches maturity. A dish of feijoa preserves placed on the table will perfume the entire room.

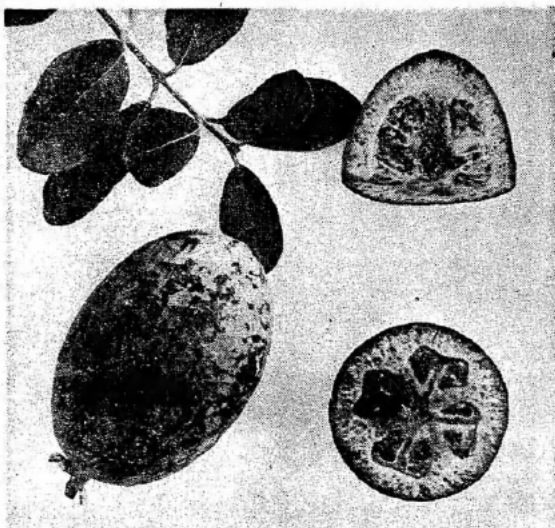
Feijoas bloom in May and June, with four fleshy petals to the blossom, which is white outside and violet red inside. These petals have the same taste as the fruit. The period from September to December, depending upon locality and variety, is the time of ripening of the fruit in our area.

Cultural Hints

Some growers may be disappointed in being unable to set any fruit, even though the plants bloom profusely. There may be several reasons for this.

Isolated specimens of feijoas are, in many cases, unproductive, due to imperfect fertilization of the flowers. Plants of the best types, when set in groups, are generally productive. Occasionally non-production may be overcome by grafting into the plant scion from a plant which is normally fruitful.

Excessive vegetative growth is brought



Fruit of feijoa, or Pineapple guava, also gray-green leaves of this fine fruiting ornamental plant.

on by a too-liberal use of water and fertilizer, which, although most necessary, must not be applied in overdoses. The penalty is plant growth at the expense of fruitfulness.

Most horticulturists hold that this plant will not tolerate much lime and that when placed on hillsides or in spots where there are considerable outcroppings of limestone, it is apt not to do well.

The thin, leathery leaves of the feijoa are quite resistant to cold and to heat. Some plants have been known to withstand a temperature of 4 deg. above zero, and they suffer no injury if properly cared for with the temperature running to 115 deg.

Survives Neglect

The feijoa is not particular as to the soil conditions, although it appears to thrive best in sandy loam soils where there is an abundance of humus. The plant will stand considerable neglect and still bear fruit, particularly along the coast, where many times it will get no water except the natural rainfall. For best results, however, it is necessary to irrigate about as frequently as for orange trees.

Basins are usually made about each plant and filled with water once or twice, depending upon the size of the plant, at intervals of three to four weeks.

This is a very good time to make liberal applications of organic matter to the soil around the plants. It should be worked well into the upper three or four inches of soil in addition to whatever mulch or covering is placed on the surface to prevent evaporation. Practically all subtropical fruits give the best results when they have liberal supplies of organic matter.

Cuttings Advisable

The feijoas can be propagated by seeds, but as they are variable and budding is not very successful on account of the hard, dry condition of the wood and the thinness of the bark, cuttings have been used successfully and are recommended where one wants to produce desirable plants. Cuttings can be made in December of well-ripened wood and placed in an ordinary cutting bed without heat. They should be rooted by March or April. Bottom heat is helpful, but not necessary. Small sprouts which appear around the base of young plants may be pulled off when three and four inches long and used as cuttings. Seedlings usually come into bearing at three or four years of age, while plants from cuttings generally bear earlier.

For orchards, plants should not be set closer than about fifteen feet apart in the square system. If the rows are somewhat wider, the plants may be set eight feet apart in the row. Where they

are used for border plantings, along driveways and fence rows, they can be set four or five feet apart.

Little Pruning Needed

Plants that are compact and low require very little pruning. Only an occasional thinning, to allow for a smaller setting and better sizing of the fruit, is necessary. Those plants that are tall and scraggly, however, will need considerable cutting back in order to prevent them from becoming so long that they can not support their weight. The plant reaches an ultimate height of fifteen to eighteen feet.

Fruits of the feijoa should be allowed to mature and fall of their own accord or be picked just before they reach that stage. They are best when laid away in a cool place until they are slightly soft and the fragrant aroma is quite strong. If it is to be entirely appreciated one should never attempt to eat this fruit until it is quite ripe.

The fruit has remarkably good shipping and keeping qualities. If properly handled, it is quite capable of standing a shipping period of one month. It will spoil quickly, however, if kept in a hot, humid atmosphere.

Very few insect pests are found on the feijoa. The black scale is the principal enemy so far noted. Fungus diseases, although occasionally in evidence, are not yet of much consequence.

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