

HOME - GARDEN SECTION

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GARDEN POINTERS

FEIJOA DESERVES MORE USE AS GARDEN SHRUB

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The Feijoa, or pineapple guava, is quite commonly planted in California as an ornamental shrub. The plants develop into large shrubs or small trees when mature, and are hardy evergreens, standing temperatures of 15 to 20 degrees. The upper surface of the leaves is dull green, while the lower side is a silvery-green color.

The flowers are especially attractive and ornamental. Each blossom consists of four cupped, fleshy petals which are a reddish-purple color above and white below. These petals can be eaten and have a delicate, appealing flavor. A tuft of crimson stamens in the center of the flower contrast with the reddish-purple petals and yellow anthers.

BRAZIL NATIVE

The native home of the Feijoa is Brazil and Uruguay. It was introduced into France and then into California about 50 years ago. It is a member of the myrtle family, to which the guava also belongs. The Feijoa is more desirable than the guava because it is much more hardy and withstands the climate of San Bernardino county satisfactorily.

The fruits mature from September to December and vary somewhat in size and form, being spherical or pear-shaped and about two or three inches long. The granular skin surrounds a mass of soft gelatinous pulp which contains a large number of soft, white

seeds. The fruits have a rich, aromatic pineapple-like odor. They are primarily used for eating fresh but they can be made into jellies and jams, which have a flavor that is distinct and delicate.

There are three good varieties of Feijoa for our area; Coolidge, Choiceana, and Superba. Commercially, varieties are propagated by layering and whip-grafting. Cuttings of young wood from ends of branches root under glass. Many of the Feijoas which are grown as ornamentals now have been started from seeds and are not commercial varieties. Anyone wishing plants can obtain seeds and sow them in pots, or flats with a good, well-drained soil. When the seedlings come up, they should be shaded. Plant them in their permanent location when about four inches high.

POPULAR VARIETY

Coolidge is the most popular variety of the tree named. One plant will set an adequate crop. Because of its self-fruitful nature, it is the best Feijoa for individual yard plantings. The other two varieties require another variety or seedling for cross-pollination to make them set a normal crop of fruit. The coolidge variety produces a pear-shaped fruit. The flavor is excellent, and is considered by many as the best Feijoa.

The Choiceana produces an oval fruit, two to three inches or more in length. The fruit is of good quality. The Superba produces somewhat small fruit which is of excellent quality.

The Feijoa should be much more widely planted as an ornamental shrub because of its gray-green color and its unusual flowers. Many people do not like the fruit until they have acquired a taste for it, but the value of the shrub alone, without the fruit, makes it a very worthwhile plant for many gardens.

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