

## **Tropical Guava**

Hands down, Guava, *Psidium guajava*, is one of the best fruit trees you can plant in south Texas. The fruit is high in valuable Carotenoids, Vitamin C, Potassium and Fiber and, if you like butterflies, it is the host plant of the Guava Skipper, a lovely Mexican beauty that crossed the river when it began losing host plants in northern Mexico. As a landscape tree, this is one that can go from a beautiful specimen container plant to a small tree in the garden. It fits just every small lot, patio garden, and they can be grouped for impact in a larger space.

Guava is indigenous to the American tropics in an area extending from southern Mexico into Central America. They have been spread by man and birds into all warm areas of tropical America and in the West Indies. Today, in the United States, they are grown commercially in Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Florida and they are an important crop in Mexico.

Guavas thrive in both humid and dry climates, but are sensitive to cold. So, in south Texas, they are best grown in full sun in an area protected from the wind. You will want to cover them, especially when they are young, anytime the temperature approaches 30 degrees or below. Guavas are evergreen, shallow-rooted shrubs or small trees, to 30 feet, with spreading branches. In our area, they will usually stay in the 12 to 15 foot height range and should be planted about 15 feet apart. Some Guava varieties have a low branching, shrub like growth habit, while others tend to have a singular, main trunk.

Guava does not like high alkaline soils. Amending the soils with compost and granulated sulphur, is recommended. Guava needs good drainage to thrive and reducing the soil ph will help assure good plant nutrition, especially all of the micro-nutrients that get tied up in our salty soils. A soil test is highly recommended for Guava and most fruit trees so that you can determine the best fertilizer program for your trees. You may contact the Extension Service, 956-383-1026 for information on taking a soil sample.

Many guava varieties have been developed, especially in the commercial producing areas. Some guava have white to yellow flesh and others range from light pink to red fleshed fruit. Flavors run from sweet to tart and acidic. Some guava are creamy in texture and meant for eating as fresh, peeled fruit while others make a great, healthy drink and some are suited for jams and jellies. You can find guava at local licensed nurseries.

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