

Guava

Botanical Name: *Psidium guajava* (Myrtaceae)

Common Name: Guava, Apple Guava

Origin: Central America and Southern Mexico

Distribution: Guavas are cultivated throughout the tropical and subtropical areas of Africa, South Asia, South East Asia, The Caribbean, North America, Australia and New Zealand.

Australian Distribution: Commercial production is centred on northern New South Wales, Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Preferred Climate and Soil Types: Guava can grow in both humid and dry tropical or subtropical climates. Guava is cultivated on varied types of soils- heavy clay to very light sandy soils. Good quality guavas are produced in river-basins. It tolerates a soil pH of 4.5- 8.2. Maximum concentration of its feeding roots is available up to 25 cm soil depth. Guavas cannot tolerate frost.

Description: Guavas are partly deciduous, shallow-rooted shrubs or small tree that, in the Darwin area, grows up to 5 meters with spreading branches. It has white flowers and edible round or pear-shaped sweet fruits usually 5-10 cm in diameter. The fruit has a thin peel, usually pale green or yellow when mature. The flesh of some varieties is hard (crunchy like an apple) other cultivars are white or pinkish in flesh color and soft when ripe with a strong, very characteristic fragrant scent. The fruit centre core contains many small hard seeds.

Varieties: For the Darwin region, the variety of 'Northern Gold' as planted in the Community Orchard can be recommended. Some others are Thai White (Glom Sali), Common and Cherry. There are seedless varieties known but they generally lack flavour.

Culture: Optimum planting distance between the trees should be at least 6 metres. Light pruning is recommended to develop a strong framework, and to establish a desirable bush-shaped canopy on a single erect stem to control height and increase the size and quality of the fruits. Remove water shoots and suckers arising from the base. Guavas belong to the same family as apples and require a heavy pruning following the crop harvest, as the fruit is formed on the new growth. Grafted guava trees grow rapidly and fruit in the first year. From seed they will take 3-4 years and can easily cross pollinate producing uncertain fruit types. They live 30 to 40 years. The tree is drought-tolerant but in dry regions lack of irrigation during the period of fruit development will cause the fruits to be deficient in size.

Guava trees respond to a complete fertilizer mix applied every two months during the first year and three monthly the second year. It can tolerate high temperatures and drought conditions, but rain during the harvesting period can deteriorate the quality of fruits.

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Pests and Diseases: Guava can be susceptible to a range of pests in the Darwin region, such as dried fruit beetle, case moths, and fruit sucking moths, leafhoppers, fruit flies and swarming beetles. One problem with Guavas is a ringbarking grub which drills a hole into the trunk, feeding off the cambium layer and covering the hole with the dead wood. Control it by removing the debris layer and applying *Pyrethrum* (natural insecticide made from dried flower heads) down the hole.

Fruiting Season: In the Darwin region there can be two fruiting periods, October to November, and February to April.

Harvesting: There is a clear change in the colour and aroma of guavas when they are ripe. For the best flavour allow fruit to ripen on the tree. Harvest by hand. Ripe fruits of guava are eaten fresh or can be stewed for use in pies. Guavas are also used to make jam, juice or jelly.



Contact Us

Phone: 8930 0300

Street Address: Harry Chan Avenue, Darwin NT 0800

Postal Address: GPO Box 84, Darwin NT 0801

E-mail: darwin@darwin.nt.gov.au