

White Sapote Varieties In California

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The white sapote (*Casimiroa edulis*), a tree native to the highlands of Mexico and Central America, is well adapted to other areas which have a subtropical climate. It is about as hardy as the sweet orange. This plant is a member of the Rutaceae (Rue family) and thus is related, though somewhat distantly, to the citrus fruits.

The white sapote is a large, evergreen tree with ash-gray bark conspicuously marked with large white lenticels. The dark green, glossy, palmately compound leaves are quite ornamental. The fruit, about the size of a large peach, is a berry-like drupe, globose to oblate in form, greenish-yellow to yellow in color, with a thin skin and a flesh of custard-like consistency. One to six large white flattened or plump seeds lie within the flesh.

Although no large commercial plantings of this fruit are to be found, there exist many dooryard and family orchard trees in southern California. The fruit is especially appreciated by Mexicans and other Latin American peoples who know of its delightful qualities. Throughout the many years the fruit has been known in California, there has been seedling selection which has resulted in the establishment of a few superior varieties.

Horticultural Classification

White sapote varieties and seedlings

can be classified into two groups in respect to bearing behavior: those which are everbearing, that is flowering and fruiting the year around, and those which bear but a single seasonal crop during the year. The fruits can be segregated further into two groups depending upon the skin color at maturity. Thus one finds yellow skinned or green skinned fruits. Yellow colored fruits generally have a tougher, more durable skin.

The genus *Casimiroa* contains six species, two of which contribute the edible fruits usually grown in California. *Casimiroa edulis* is the common white sapote. The woolly-leaved white sapote or matasano, *Casimiroa tetrameria*, is found only occasionally as a dooryard specimen or in collections. The latter is considered by some authorities to be a botanical variety of *Casimiroa edulis*. The *tetrameria* form is characterized by rather heavy pubescence on the leaves and young shoot tips, and by the fact that the flower parts are generally four in number. Only one variety of *C. tetrameria* has been established in California under the name of Max Golden. The woolly-leaved white sapote is considered by most people to be somewhat inferior in fruit quality to that of the common white sapote.

The potentialities of the white sapote as a commercial fruit have not been fully explored. When picked at the

proper stage of maturity and shipped in adequate containers, it can be sent safely for great distances. The unusual and excellent flavor of this fruit will cause it to eventually find a place among the better known fruits from California.

The following descriptions are of the more important white sapote varieties now grown in California:

Pike

This variety, introduced as seed by the United States Department of Agriculture, originated at Santa Barbara, California. The tree is a very heavy producer of fruit which matures in the fall during a relatively short season. It is a fruit of high quality.

Fruit form is globose to slightly



Pike sapote, a productive, high quality variety ripening over a relatively short season in the fall.

oblate, size up to 3½ inches in diameter, weight about 10 oz.

Surface is smooth, the apex drawn to slight point with radiating furrows leading from it for a short distance. Stem is stout, short set in a shallow cavity which is marked by slight undulations. Skin color is green, texture very soft and fragile. It does not handle well, but is desirable for home use because of its good bearing behavior and quality.

Suebelle

Fruit form globose, up to 3 inches in diameter. Surface is smooth with no prominent markings. Skin is yellowish-green in color and medium in texture. Seed is medium to small. The tree is large, upright and tends to bear early. It blooms and matures fruit all year round in most areas. The flavor is excellent. This variety was discovered as a seedling at Encinitas, California.

Wilson

Fruit form globose to slightly oblate. Surface is smooth with no prominent markings. The tree is a heavy producer of fall and winter fruit of high quality. This variety, which originated in Monrovia, is rather widely planted.

Coleman

Form globose, with marked tendency toward lobing. The apex is somewhat depressed with radiating furrows leading from it. Size to 3 inches in diameter, skin color yellowish-green. This variety is a rather constant bearer with a moderately long season beginning in late fall and ending in the summer. The tree is not a vigorous grower in most

cases and has been found rather difficult to propagate. The fruit quality is good. This variety also originated in Monrovia.

Yellow

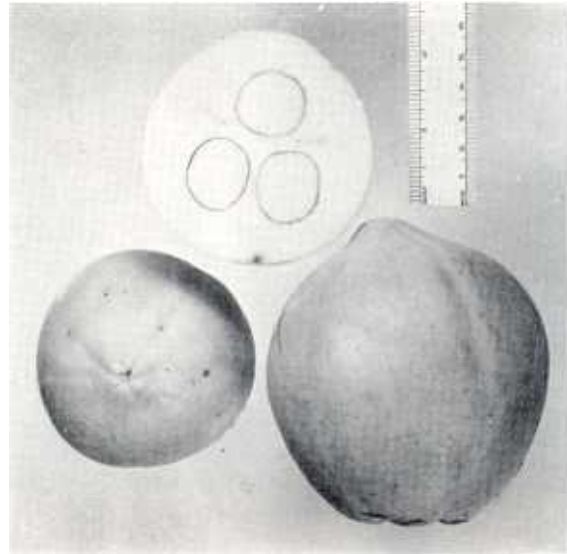
Fruit form oval with apex drawn to rather sharp point. Surface is characterized by longitudinal furrows extending from apex to base. Skin is yellow in color and rather tough. The fruit hangs well on the tree and keeps well after picking. The flavor is good.

Maltby

Fruit form globose with apex drawn to short blunt point and stem end gently tapered. Apex has faint longitudinal furrows extending to the tip and basal cavity marked by fine humps. Skin smooth, yellow-green in color, the flavor is good, but rather bitter. This variety, originally from Carlsbad, is a good bearer of large size fruits.

Max Golden

This is a tetrameria (wooly-leaved) type. Fruit form conical with very flat point. Apex somewhat depressed. Size



Yellow sapota. This variety has a rather tough yellow skin, good flavor, hangs well on the tree and keeps well after picking.

up to 4½ inches in length. Seed few, rather pointed. Skin moderately tough yellowish-green in color. Flavor is strong, somewhat bitter, especially when grown in cooler areas. This variety, which originated at Carlsbad, tends to set fruit with relatively few seed. It is not widely planted.



HEAP BIG SENSE

A farm magazine published pictures of a dilapidated house and badly eroded field and invited readers to write the story of the pictures. An Oklahoma Indian won over 2,604 contestants with this:

"Both pictures show white man crazy. Make big tepee, plow hill. Water wash. Wind blow soil, grass all gone.

Squaw gone, papoose too. No chuck-away. No pig, no corn, no hay, no cow, grass.. Buffalo eat. Indian eat Buffalo, no pony. Indian no plow land. Keep hide make tepee, moccasins, too. Indian no make terraces. No build dam. No give dam. All time eat. No hunt job. No hitchhike. No ask relief. No shoot pig. Great spirit make grass. Indian no waste anything. Indian no work. White man heap crazy."