THE FEIJOA IN CALIFORNIA

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The feijoa* (**Feijoa sellowiana**) is planted widely in California primarily as an ornamental shrub or small tree. Occasional small commercial plantings are to be found which range in size from to one or two acres. The popularity of the plant results from its adaptation to a wide range of environmental conditions as well as its aesthetic value in the landscape. Although comparatively unkiown to the general public the feijoa fruit is eagerly sought by those acquainted with its delicate and delicious flavor. It was introduced into California from France about fifty years ago. The original home of the feijoa is Brazil and Uruguay.

As a member of the myrtle family the feijoa somewhat resembles the guava and thus sometimes is called pineapple guava because of the suggestion of pineapple odor in the fruit. It is however, considerably more hardy than any of the true guavas, withstanding temperatures of 15 to 20 degrees F. apparently without harm.

A Fine Ornamental Plant

The plant, which attains the size of a large shrub or small tree, is a hardy evergreen subtropical. The dull green upper surface and silvery lower side of the coriaceous ovate leaves and the large, attractive flowers results in its being widely planted as an ornamental material. The flowers consist of four cupped, thick, fleshy petals, reddish purple above and white below. The petals are edible, having a delicate appealing flavor. From the center of the flower a tuft of crimson stamens arise, each stamen topped with a bright yellow anther.

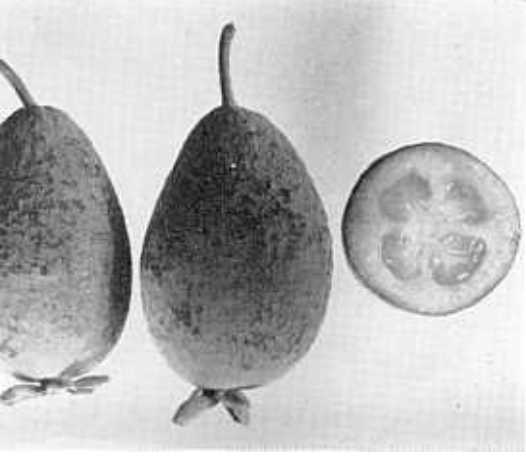
The fruit, which matures from September to December, is variable in size and form, but in general is spherical, ovate or pyriform and about two or

Feijoa flowers, fruit and leaves.

*pronounced fay-zho-a

three inches long. The surface is a glaucous green color and covered with delicate bloom. It may be smooth or slightly pebbled. The skin consists of a granular layer one-eighth to one-fourth inch in thickness which surrounds a mass of soft gelatinous pulp containing a large number of small soft white seeds. The rich, aromatic pineapple-like odor of the fruit makes it acceptable to most palates. The primary use of the fruit is for eating out of hand or it may be spooned out of the half-shell. Fine jellies and jams of distinct and delicate flavor are frequently made from it. This fruit may also be used as flavoring for ice-creams or sherbets and as filler for pies. It handles very well as a fresh fruit because of the tough skin.

Since its introduction into California about five decades ago the feijoa has been grown primarily from seed. Propagation of horticultural varieties, although somewhat difficult, has been practiced during the past two decades. A few recognized varieties now are found in dooryard collections or in small commercial plantings. Three varieties, namely Coolidge, Choiceana and Superba are the more widely planted and are of greatest importance. A few other seedling selections have been made and are being propagated in local areas but have not become widely known as yet.



Coolidge, the most popular feijoa at the present time.

Coolidge Most Popular Variety

The Coolidge is propagated more than any other named variety. This has resulted from the fact that the Coolidge variety is sufficiently self-fruitful to produce adequate crops even when grown as an isolated specimen. Most feijoa seedlings or clones show a tendency toward partial self-sterility; hence interplanting of varieties or the provision of seedling pollinators is recommended.

The fruit of the Coolidge variety is characterized by moderately large size and a pyriform shape. Sometimes the neck is quite pronounced. The flavor is excellent and is considered by many as the best among feijoas. The fact that the plant is quite self-fruitful makes the Coolidge variety desirable for planting in dooryard or small collections.

Choiceana and Superba Have High Quality

The variety Choiceana produces an oval fruit two to three or more inches in length. It is of good quality and highly regarded by many as a fine fruit. This variety has been planted

frequently but does not bear large crops unless another source of pollen is provided.

The somewhat smaller spherical fruit of the Superba variety is nevertheless of excellent quality. This variety too exhibits partial self-sterility, thus fruit set is enhanced when other pollen sources are made available.

While relatively unknown and unexploited at present the feijoa offers some possibility of becoming a fruit of at least minor importance in California. New outlets such as frozen pulp packs of feijoa which may be used directly as dessert fruit or as flavoring for ice-creams or beverages may possibly increase the popularity of this fruit.

TESTING STRAWBERRY VARIETIES

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A fine plan for testing strawberry varieties is being initiated in Massachusetts:

The plan is briefly as follows: Fifty plants each of 5 varieties will be delivered to a widely distributed list of strawberry growers. These plants will be set together and receive the same care as the grower gives to his own planting. Each of the cooperating growers will be asked to space the plants in his usual way, and in 1950, keep yield records by varieties. Howard 17, or Premier, and Catskill will be included in each test. The other three varieties are Sparkle, Midland, and Fairland. By including Howard 17, one of the most commonly grown varieties as a yardstick, a direct comparison with the other varieties will be possible.

The advantages of this method of testing strawberry varieties are obvious. A variety which does well on Cape Cod is not necessarily well adapted to the upland soils in Franklin County. Howard 17, does fairly well on light soil. Others require heavier, more retentive soil. By growing the same five varieties in a number of localities, on different soil types and at different elevations, we will be able to obtain some valuable information.

This system of testing should produce some valuable results. It would appear to be a plan which other states might include in their expirment station program.

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