

The 'African Pride' Atemoya in Florida

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The 'African Pride' atemoya originated in South Africa, and was introduced into Australia by Langbecker Nurseries, Bundaberg, Queensland a number of years ago. Langbecker Nurseries introduced it commercially in 1960. It is highly recommended in Australia because of the prolific crops it bears and its good quality.

Although this variety is known as a custard apple in Australia, as grown in Florida it has all the appearances of a hybrid between *Annona squamosa* x *Annona cherimola*. Hybrids between these two species are known in Florida and many other parts of the world as atemoyas. This common name was coined years ago by P. J. Wester from the Philippine word "ates" for *A. squamosa* and the Spanish and English word "cherimoya" for *A. cherimola*. Wester was the first man to

recognize these hybrids. Therefore, we are using the term atemoya for this variety in Florida.

Several members of the Rare Fruit Council of South Florida cooperated in importing six plants of this variety in 1963. These were planted in different locations in the Miami area. The first fruits were produced in 1965.

The high quality of the fruit produced by the 'African Pride' atemoya, and its ability to bear good crops under South Florida conditions has created considerable interest among fruit hobbyists. The variety is being propagated by some of these hobbyists now, so that others will have a chance to try it out. The Fairchild Tropical Garden has propagated a number of trees for testing in their orchard. Additional years of testing will be necessary before it can be determined whether or not there are commercial possibilities.

In South Florida, African Pride makes two crops a year. The first crop ripens in September and October, while the second ripens in March and April. The tree sheds its leaves in March and April for a short dormant period, and then leafs out and flowers in May. Bloom for the second crop comes in September. The fruit is a dull green color and weighs up to 20 ounces. African Pride makes a smaller tree than other varieties.

African Pride shows promise of being a better bearing atemoya than the Page and Bradley, two varieties previously grown in Florida. It also has better quality fruit. Atemoyas are cold hardy only in the southern part of Florida.



Fig. 1. African Pride, an improved clone of the atemoya, a fine subtropical fruit for southern Florida.

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