



MAYHAW
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INTRODUCTION

Deep in the dark water swamps and hammocks of the lower South, along sandy river banks, wild mayhaws grow. For generations, Southerners have made the yearly trek by boat to harvest the floating fruit with nets. The fruit is boiled in a kettle until it bursts and releases the flavor. The juice is strained to make a beautiful, coral-colored jelly. The flavor is exquisite, like sweet apple with overtones of mango and an aroma of pineapple. When you can find Mayhaw Jelly, it will cost at least \$5 a pint and well worth it. The success of modern mayhaw growing can be attributed to Sherwood Atkins, famous for "taking the swamp out of the mayhaw". Mr. Atkins spent long days in the Louisiana swamps, locating superior mayhaws that will thrive in ordinary garden soils.

USES IN THE LANDSCAPE

Mayhaws are covered with white blooms in the spring followed by bright red fruit. Mix with dogwoods for early spring bloom. Use as a specimen tree or mix in with apples, peaches and plums for months of fresh fruit. Mayhaws are terrific for wildlife and tough enough to plant out in the woods.

PLANTING AND CULTURE

SITE SELECTION

Well-drained, deep soils are preferred, but mayhaws will grow on many soil types. You don't need a swamp to grow mayhaws these days, although wet soils are tolerated. Trees will grow more vigorously and produce more fruit in full sun. Two different varieties are required for pollination. Plant 15-20 feet apart for best results.

SOIL PREPARATION AND PLANTING

Mayhaw prefers slightly acid soil (pH 4.2-5.5). If you are in doubt about the acidity of your soil, take a sample to the Cooperative Extension Agent in your county for a soil test.

Dig a planting hole approximately three times the width of the pot and at the same depth as the root ball. Enrich the planting hole with peat moss or rotted pine bark mixed with soil dug from the hole (50:50 mix). Remove the plant from the pot, gently loosen the root ball and place in the planting hole. To avoid burying too deep, make sure plant is positioned with the top most roots at the soil line. Fill the

planting hole with the mix of soil and organic matter; gently tamp it in. Water thoroughly to settle the roots and eliminate air pockets. **Do NOT put fertilizer in the planting hole.** Only apply fertilizer if it is the correct time of year (see Fertilization section below).

If desired, construct a water basin around the base of the tree approximately 36 inches in diameter. Mulch in spring and summer with approximately 4-6 inches of mulch. Pull mulch a couple of inches away from the trunk for good air circulation.

FERTILIZATION

We use and recommend the Espoma line of organic fertilizers. Espoma's Holly Tone is a good choice for mayhaw trees. When not available look for an organic mix that contains an analyst of roughly 4-3-4. Make sure they contain iron, zinc, manganese, magnesium, molybdenum, copper and boron. These minor elements are very important to plants and most soils are low in these elements. Application rates vary according to size and age of plant, so read the instructions on the bag and fertilize accordingly. Spread the fertilizer evenly under the entire canopy of the plant avoiding a 5-inch area around the trunk. Water or rake in. For Zones 8a-9, fertilize 3 times each year in February, May and late July/early August. For plants further north (Zone 7), fertilize 2 times each year in March and June/July. **Never fertilize after August** (July in Zone 7) as this will promote new growth late in the year which will be subject to freeze damage.

WATER

The first year is a critical time for the establishment of a new mayhaw. Water thoroughly twice a week on light soils and once a week on clay soils. Soak the entire root system deeply - this usually takes 40-50 minutes. Mayhaws should receive at least 1 inch of water each week for best growth and fruit production. Water regularly, especially during dry periods. Fruit may drop prematurely if insufficiently irrigated during dry spells.

PRUNING AND CARE

Mayhaw have few pests and diseases. Cedar apple rust can be a problem in areas where native cedar and wild hawthorns are present. Apply copper sulfate on new flushes of growth to protect them. Train to a single trunk at the base. Occasional pruning is necessary to open the center of the tree for greater light and air penetration. Remove crossing, dead or damaged branches as needed.

HARVEST

Fruit should be allowed to thoroughly ripen on the tree for best quality and flavor. It will fall from the tree when ripe or shake the branches over a clean sheet in April and May.

VARIETY SELECTION – NEED 2 DIFFERENT ONES FOR POLLINATION!

BETSY - Heavy bearer with very large red, round fruit. The flesh is bright red. Ripens early May.

BIG RED - Large fruit, red-skinned with pink flesh. Late-blooming, ripens in late April-Early May.

GEORGIA GEM - Large, red fruit is up to $\frac{3}{4}$ " diameter. Makes a dark, coral jelly. Ripens mid-late May.

RELIABLE - Late bloomer, rarely caught in late frost. Large fruit with red skin. Ripens mid-late May.

To cook mayhaws and extract juice: Combine 1 gallon mayhaws with 1 gallon water. Cook until tender (about 30 minutes). Strain through a cloth, extracting as much juice as possible. This should make 10 cups of juice. If not, add water to make 10 cups. Juice may be sweetened to taste or mixed with other fruit juices for a refreshing treat! **Mayhaw Jelly:** Make jelly using 5 cups mayhaw juice, 7 cups sugar and 1 box Sure-Jell. Cook as directed on Sure-Jell box. **Mayhaw Syrup:** Combine 1 cup mayhaw juice, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup white Karo syrup (to prevent jelling). Cook at a rapid boil for 18 to 20 minutes. Great on pancakes!