

DEFINITION OF DESSERT FRUIT CROPS

The term fruit can have different meanings but in the botanical biology it is the ripened ovary of a flowering plant which contains seeds. However fruit as food limits the usage to those fruits that are sweet and fleshy.

A dessert is a sweet food served as a part of a main meal or after the main meal. Dessert fruit therefore is sweet fruit served and eaten with or after a main meal.

Example include Mango, Banana, Pawpaw, Guava Pineapple, Apple, Passion fruit, Grape, Date palm e.t.c

African star apple

Tangerine

Pawpaw

Avocado pear

Major Classes of Dessert fruits/Indigenous fruits/Wild

Indigenous fruits are those which are native to Africa, where they have originated and evolved over centuries.

Most indigenous fruit trees generally grow wild. The fruits are harvested and eaten at home, sold at the market or processed into jams and juices to add additional value. Indigenous trees, such as marula, baobab, African plum, are mostly found wild, although some are now planted, but they all evolved in the African environment.

Exotic fruits, are imported from other continents, although they may now be quite commonly grown in many areas such as Citrus and Mango. Mango particularly is common across much of Africa but actually originated in southeast Asia.

Factors affecting cultivation of dessert fruits

i) Ecological requirements

- ❖ altitude,
- ❖ wind,
- ❖ rainfall,
- ❖ temperature,

- ❖ irradiation /photoperiod
- ❖ soil type

ii) Establishment and management practices –

Papaya

Indigenous to southern Mexico, Central and South America, papaya plants are relatively short lived (1-3 years) and are easily propagated from seed. Seedlings are spaced on the field at 2- 4m spacing. Papayas are relatively easy to grow so long as they are sited in full sun and have excellent drainage. Common throughout the tropics, papayas are small to large fruits born on the stem of upright semi-herbaceous trunks. Fruit are sweet, have orange to reddish-salmon colored flesh and contain numerous small black seeds in the interior cavity. Papaya fruit is typically peeled, sliced and consumed fresh. Papaya ringspot virus can be a problem causing stunting and fruit loss; at present there is no control for this disease. Papaya fruit fly is another problem but can be overcome by placing a paper bag over developing fruit. Papaya needs light well drained soil, avoid water logged condition. Amend the soil with plenty of organic matter and fertilize often. The young fast growing plant needs regular application of N – fertilizer, deficiency of P- fertilizer results in dark green foliage. Season: year round.

Passion Fruit

Native to South America, passion fruit is a vigorous vine that produces purple, yellow, or reddish colored fruit containing seeds surrounded by an orange, sweet, watery pulp. The juice is very aromatic and is commonly used to make juice or punch. Plant vines next to a fence or along a trellis in a well drained soil area with full sun. Vines begin to bear within 3-6 months of planting. Season June-Dec.