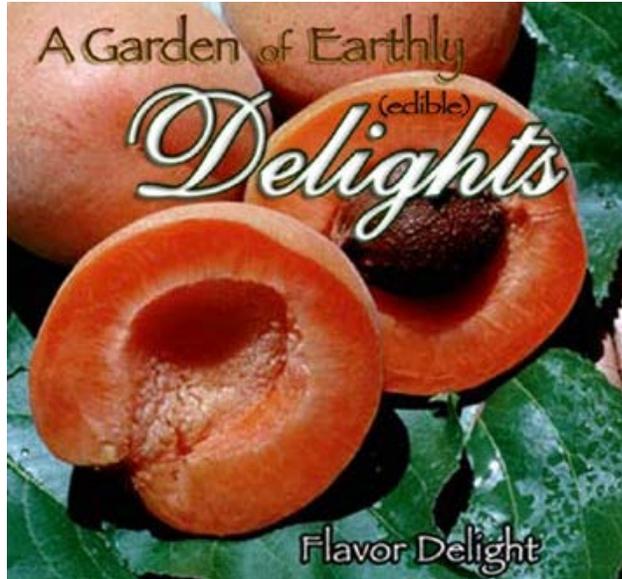




# A Garden Compass Re-Publication

...by Dave Wilson Nursery 



## Exotic Fruits

by Tom Spellman

Exotic fruits, to most people, are tropical natives such as guava, mango, banana and cherimoya—fruits that conjure up images of white sandy beaches, coconut palms swaying in the balmy breeze and Carmen Miranda's overflowing fruit basket of a hat.

You don't have to live in Hawaii to grow a mango or banana, however; many exotics can be successfully grown in the banana-belts of the southwestern United States.

But if you don't live there either, there are exotics that can survive freezing temperatures and still produce a bounty of fragrant, sweet treats, reminiscent of a tropical paradise.

### Pineapple Guava

(*Feijoa sellowiana*)

Hardy to 12 degrees and native to the tropics of Central and South America, the pineapple guava was exported in the late 19th century to Australia and New Zealand where it has been an important commercial crop for more than 100 years. The fruit is sold domestically and to foreign markets worldwide.

Pineapple guava is a beautiful, evergreen shrub or small tree (growing to 15 feet), which may also serve as a landscape accent or backdrop due to its silvery-blue foliage and cinnamon-colored "peely"-textured bark. The flowers, borne in May and June, are 1-1/2" to 2 inches in diameter and striking crimson-pink on white. The thick waxy flower petals are edible, with a subtle flavor similar to a mild honeysuckle, making them perfect when used as a garnish or sprinkled on salads and desserts.

The fruit is ripe in the fall, from October to December. Oblong in shape, these fruits weigh from 1-1/2 to 6 ounces, depending on the cultivar. On the tree, the fruit is sometimes hard to spot, as it is the same silvery-blue color as the foliage, even when ripe. Harvest when the fruits begin to drop—don't worry if they fall, they'll be at peak flavor. In sunny locations, pick them up immediately, however, as ripe fruit on the ground is susceptible to sunburn. The flesh has the texture of a pear and tastes like a blend of pineapple, strawberry and banana.

Two good grafted cultivars are Coolidgi, developed by the Coolidge gardens in Pasadena, California, in the 1930s, and Nazemetz, developed by Paul Thompson at Bonsal, California, in the 1960s. Both have large fruit and are self-fruitful, but they produce much larger crops if cross-pollinated with each other or another variety.

### Loquat (*Eriobotrya japonica*)



**Hardy to 12 degrees, the loquat, native to the Far East, was originally brought to California by Chinese workers who immigrated during the gold rush of the mid-19th century.**

Loquat was a welcome addition to the early pioneers' diet, as fruit was not commonplace at that time in California. The time of harvest (March to June) was especially important; there were limited amounts of citrus available during the winter and stone and pome fruits during the summer, but not much in the spring, except for loquats. To a large extent, this holds true today.

Loquats are precocious, usually producing in the second or third year from seed. Light yellow to bright orange fruits are borne in terminal clusters of up to 20 or more. Loquat seedlings are usually very productive, but fruit size and quality is variable as seeds usually take up most of the interior.

**These are among the several superior, large-fruiting, grafted cultivars available:**

**Advance.** Medium to large fruit is oval to pear-shaped with deep yellow skin and sweet, white flesh. Ripe April through May. Requires cross-pollination by another loquat cultivar or seedling.

**Big Jim.** The largest fruit developed to date. Excellent backyard tree, excellent commercial potential. Oval fruits, up to 2 ounces each, have bright orange skin and sweet, juicy, orange flesh. Harvest early April through May. Self-fruitful.

**Fig**  
(*Ficus carica*)



Valued for thousands of years for its palatable fruit, fig cultivation predates written history. The fig was grown during the Sumerian era around 3000 B.C. and by the Assyrians around 2000 B.C. After that, its acceptance spread like wildfire, as it easily adapted to climates from temperate to tropical.

The fig was introduced to present-day California in 1769 when Father Junipero Serra brought the Mission fig from Baja California to the mission at San Diego.

Figs thrive in most soil types, do well with little water and produce abundant fruit that successively ripens over an extended summer season.

Figs also contribute an attractive, tropical look from spring to fall with their large-sized palmate foliage. All figs have a very low winter chilling requirement, about 100 hours below 45 degrees.

**Some excellent choices  
(all self-fruitful) are available:**

**Flanders.** Introduced in 1965 by Dr. Ira Condit. Deep violet striped fruit with white flecks. Bright amber flesh with a rich flavor, highly productive. Highly resistant to splitting.

**Janice Seed-less Kadota.** Newer white selection with few to no seeds. Prolonged harvest period — August through November. Adapted to both coastal and inland climates.

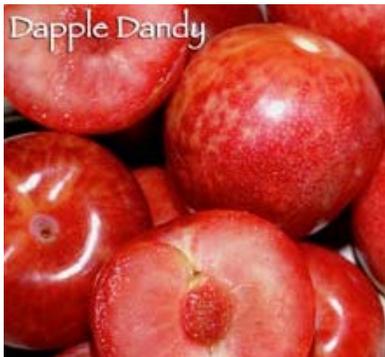
**Panachee Tiger-Striped Fig.** Exceptionally fine-flavored variety, with unique tiger-striped variegation of fruit and young growth. Bright strawberry-red interior flesh.



**Pluot and Aprium Interspecifics**

**Crosses of plum and apricot, these exotics are hardy to minus 10 degrees or less.** In recent years, a great deal of effort has been directed toward the development of these tasty hybrids that offer the best characteristics of both fruit types. Zaiger Genetics of Modesto, California, the world-renowned, cutting-edge hybridizer of deciduous fruits, performs literally thousands of plum-apricot crosses each year. From the resulting hybrid seedlings, only a handful showing great promise are planted in test orchards for a three- to four-year evaluation. Of these, perhaps one or two per year are considered for commercial release.

**Here are some of the Zaiger highlights:**



**Dapple Dandy Pluot Interspecific.**

High-quality taste-test winner, ranking with Flavor King and Flavor Supreme, named "Best Flavored Fruit" at Dave Wilson Nursery tastings. Creamy white and red flesh, freestone, with wonderful plum and apricot flavor. Greenish-yellow skin, with red spots turning to a maroon and yellow dapple. Ripens in August. Requires 400 to 500 chill hours. Pollenized by Flavor Supreme, Dapple Dandy, Santa Rosa plum or Burgundy plum. Patent no. 9254.

**Flavorich Pluot Interspecific.**

Large, dark purple-skinned fruits, and firm, very sweet, yellow-orange flesh. Late ripening selection — August through early September (two to three weeks after Flavor King). Requires 800 chill hours. Pollenized by Japanese plum or other Pluot selection. Patent no. 8546.

**Champagne.** Medium to large, teardrop-shaped fruit, with yellow skin and light yellow flesh. Interesting, sweet-tart flavor makes it many tasters' favorite. Earliest loquat to ripen — March through April. Self-fruitful.

**Pawpaws  
(*Asimina triloba*)**



**Hardy to minus 20 degrees, pawpaws are native to the eastern United States and once were plentiful from New York to Georgia and west to Texas and Nebraska.**

A staple food of Native Americans, pawpaws were almost certainly spread throughout the eastern United States via their nomadic lifestyle.

Pawpaws are members of the *Anona* family, which also includes cherimoyas, soursops and atemoya. As young plants, pawpaws are sensitive to full sunlight; it is best to grow nursery stock or young transplants in a filtered sun location. Once established, they prefer full sun and a well-drained rich soil.

Until recently, they were not well-known in California, but there is documentation of trees growing and producing from San Diego to the San Francisco Bay area. Until the 1960s, there was a tree growing on the campus of the University of California at Los Angeles that was known to have been productive for more than 50 years. In recent years, more and more research effort has been directed to pawpaw production in California.

Pawpaws are ripe in the fall, from September to early November. For best results, plant at least two cultivars for cross-pollination. Performance of seedlings is inconsistent, but several grafted varieties show great promise. Varieties to try are Prolific, Rebecca's Gold (developed in California), Sunflower and Wells.

### Flavor King Pluot Interspecific.

Recent taste-test winner, a unique plum-apricot hybrid with sensational bouquet and sweet-spicy flavor. Reddish-purple skin and crimson flesh. Ripen in mid to late August. Naturally small tree. Requires 400 to 500 chill hours and pollination by Flavor Supreme, Santa Rosa plum or Late Santa Rosa plum. Patent no. 8026.

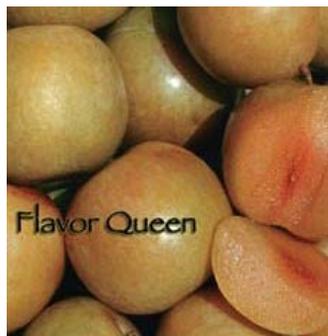


### Flavor Supreme Pluot Interspecific.

Greenish-maroon mottled fruit, with sweet, richly flavored, firm red flesh. Early harvest season — June. Requires 700 to 800 chill hours. Pollenized by Santa Rosa, Late Santa Rosa or another Pluot. Patent no. 6763.

### Geo Pride Pluot Interspecific.

Red-skinned variety with yellow flesh and a tart-sweet to predominantly sweet flavor. Very heavy producer. Harvest season mid-July to early August, just ahead of Flavor Queen. Chilling requirement estimated at 500 to 600 hours. Pollenized by Flavor Supreme, Dapple Dandy or Santa Rosa plum. Excellent pollinizer for other Pluot varieties. Patent no. 10386.



### Flavor Queen Pluot Interspecific.

One of the original Pluot selections and still one of the best. Greenish-yellow skin, amber-orange flesh with exquisite, candy-like sweetness. July through mid-August harvest. Requires 400 to 500 chill hours. Requires a pollinizer: an early-blooming Pluot or Japanese plum such as Burgundy. Patent no. 7420.

### Flavor Delight Aprium Interspecific.

Apricot-plum hybrid resembling an apricot, but with a distinct texture and flavor all its own. One of the most flavorful early season fruits, ripens early June. Requires 300 chill hours. Self-fruitful, but produces biggest crops if pollinated by another apricot. Patent no. 7090.

## Pomegranate (*Punica granatum*)



**Hardy to 10 degrees, the pomegranate originated in the Middle East, where for centuries it was grown as a symbol of prosperity and fertility.** It is known to have been one of the most highly cherished plants in the fabled gardens of Babylon. The Romans called it the "apple of Carthage."

Now widely grown throughout California, the pomegranate is valued as much for its ornamental appeal as for its fruit. In fact, several non-fruiting varieties are grown just for their beautiful spring and summer flowers, with colors of white, yellow, orange-red and variegated.

Since it is difficult to keep the pomegranate trained as a single trunk tree (it suckers readily),

it is usually trained in a shrub or hedge form, mature specimens averaging 8 to 10 feet in height. A dwarf form (*Punica nana*) is also available, which grows to a very compact 3 or 4 feet in height. It has a bright orange flower, followed by a dark red, golf-ball-sized, edible fruit.

The standard commercial variety, Wonderful, which produces a large purplish-red fruit with a deep red interior, is the commercial source of Grenadine. It is also used for fruit punch and to add flavor and color in many Middle Eastern dishes.

Several sweet varieties are also available, including Eversweet, a very sweet, almost seedless fruit, which has a red skin and almost clear, non-staining juice. Ambrosia, a very large fruit (up to 2 pounds) with light red skin and bright pink flesh is much sweeter than Wonderful. Also available are the old Utah Sweet (aka Mormon Sweet), which is also non-staining, and another variety simply called Sweet.

So even if you don't live where you can grow papaya and mango and wear shorts in the winter, elsewhere in California, many other enticing, temperate-zone exotics may be grown successfully.

[Tom Spellman](#), a well-known Southern CA nurseryman, is the Southwest sales manager for Dave Wilson Nursery.

