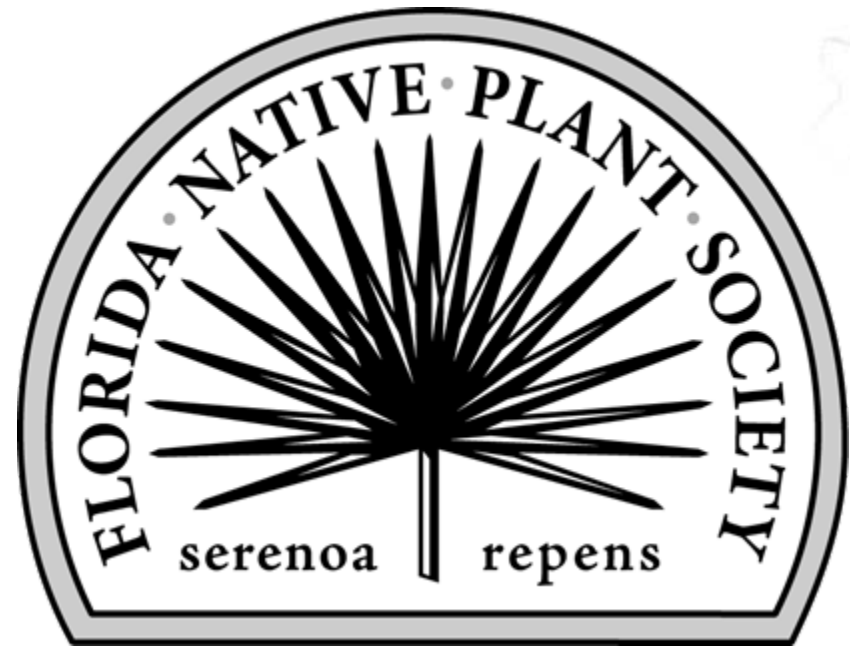


Florida Native Plant Society

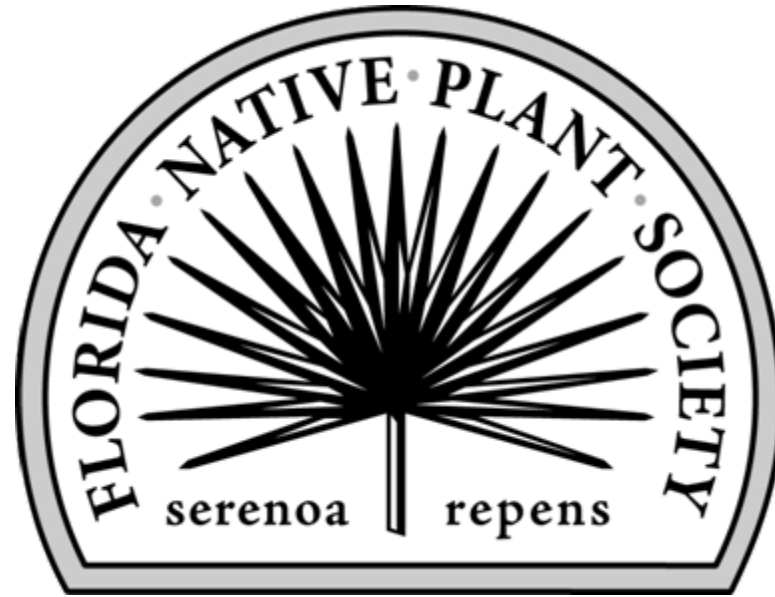


Native Plant Owners Manual

Asimina pygmea – Dwarf Pawpaw

Mark Hutchinson

Florida Native Plant Society



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Mark Hutchinson

Dwarf Pawpaw

Pawpaw family



Asimina pygmea





Navigation Links

(for use in open discussion)

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[Biological Classification – Tree of Life](#)

Where does this plant grow?

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- [In Florida](#)

What this plant needs to -

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‘View/Full Screen Mode’
recommended

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presentation, clicking
this symbol will return
you to this page.



Dwarf Pawpaw, gopher berry, paw-paw



Asimina (a - SEE - mee - nuh)

From the Native
American word for this plant

pygmea (pig - MAY - uh)

Derived from either the
Latin '*pygmaeus*' or the Greek
'*pygmaios*' meaning dwarf.
Most of the genus *Asimina* are
trees, whereas the species
pygmea is a shrub.



Biological and Genetic Relationships

Asimina pygmae (Bartram) Duval - dwarf pawpaw

└─ *Asimina* Adans. - pawpaw

└─ Annonaceae (pawpaw family)

Eupomatiaceae

Magnoliaceae (magnolias and tulip trees)

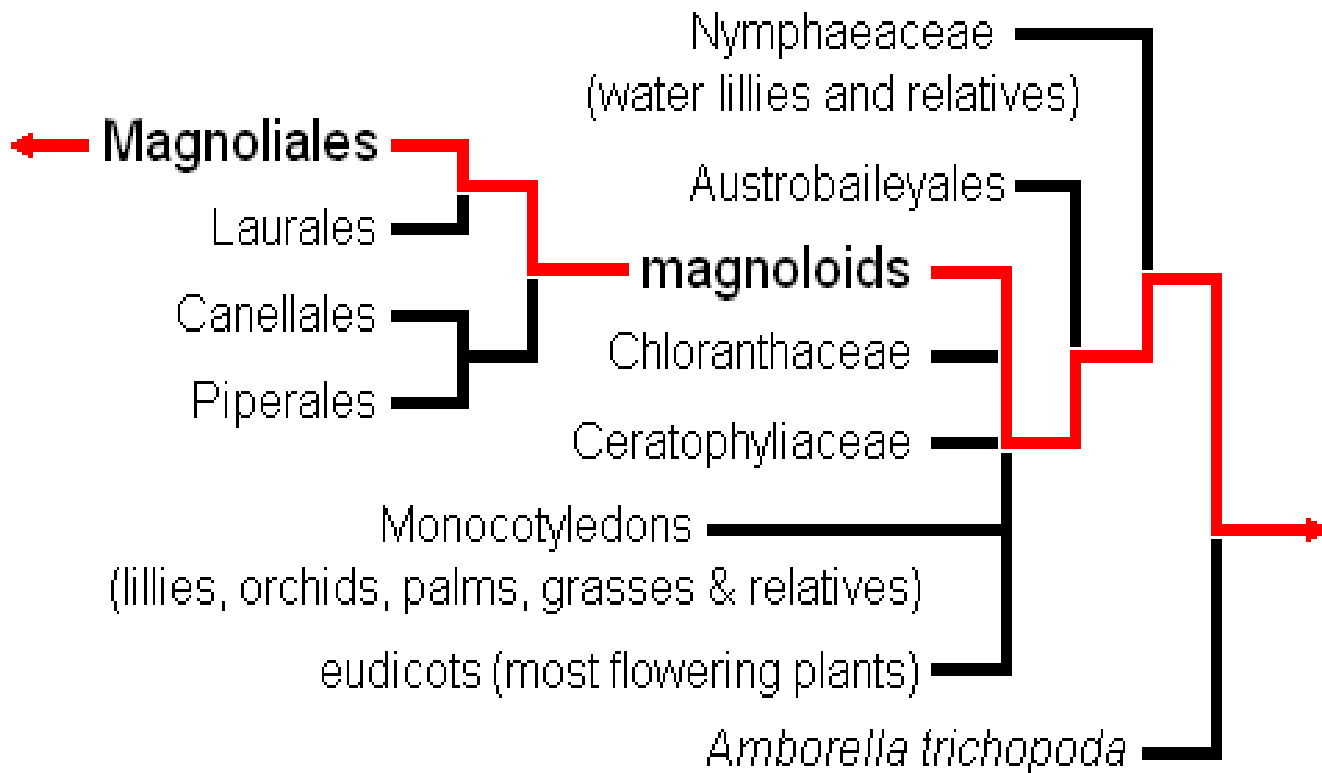
Degeneriaceae

Himantandraceae

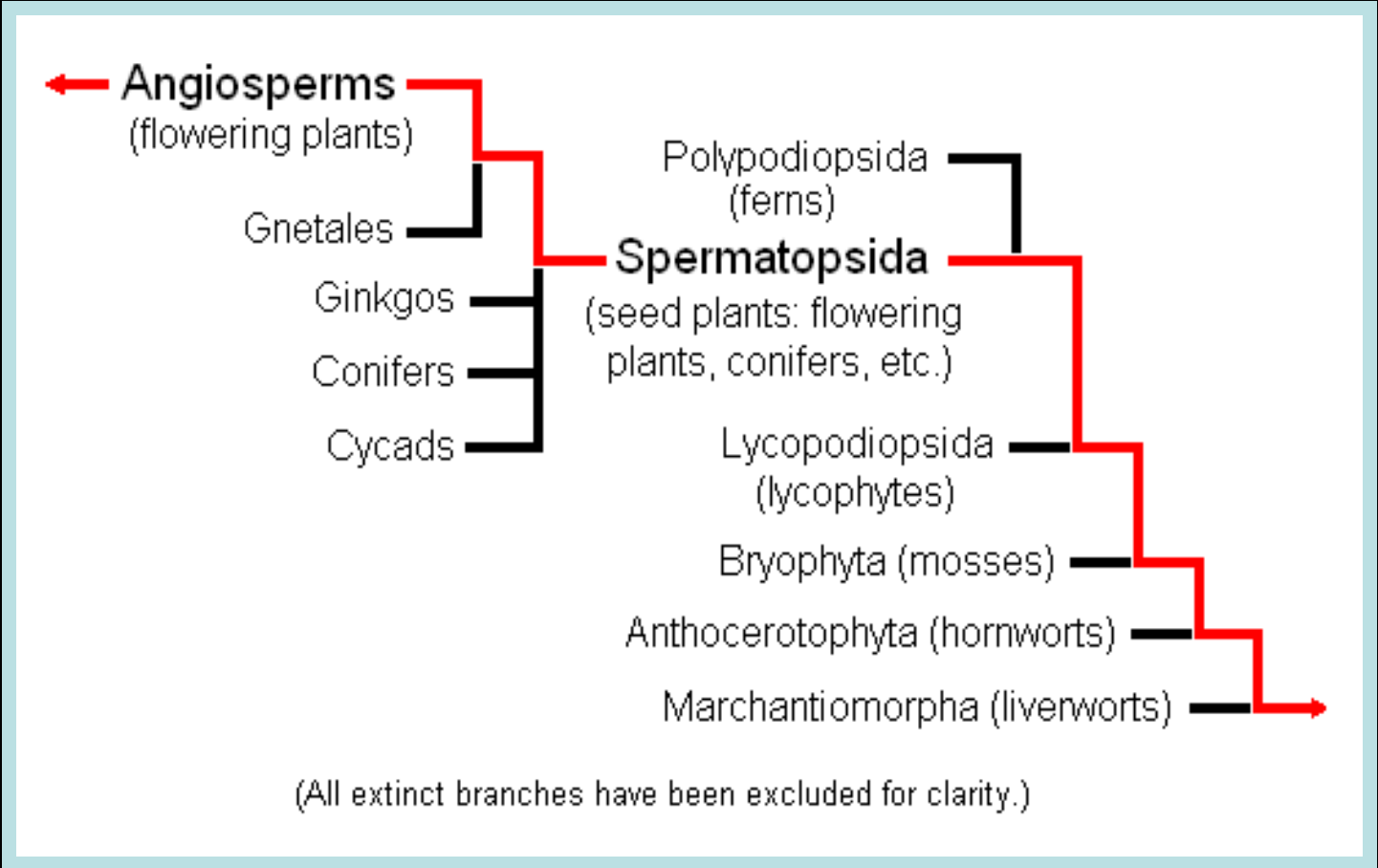
Myristicaceae (nutmeg family)

Each species is a leaf on the Tree of Life. Its genetic connections can be explored by following the branches (red line), towards the roots of life.





(Individual species and genus denoted by italics)



Link to the University of Arizona's [Tree of Life](#).



Species Distribution in North America



(For specific distribution within any of the shaded areas go to the USDA link provided on the reference page, and click the shaded area of interest.)

Dwarf Pawpaw, native to North America, is endemic to the southeastern United States, occurring only in Florida and Georgia. In Georgia it has only been found in Camden County, adjacent to north Florida, and is considered “critically imperiled” there.





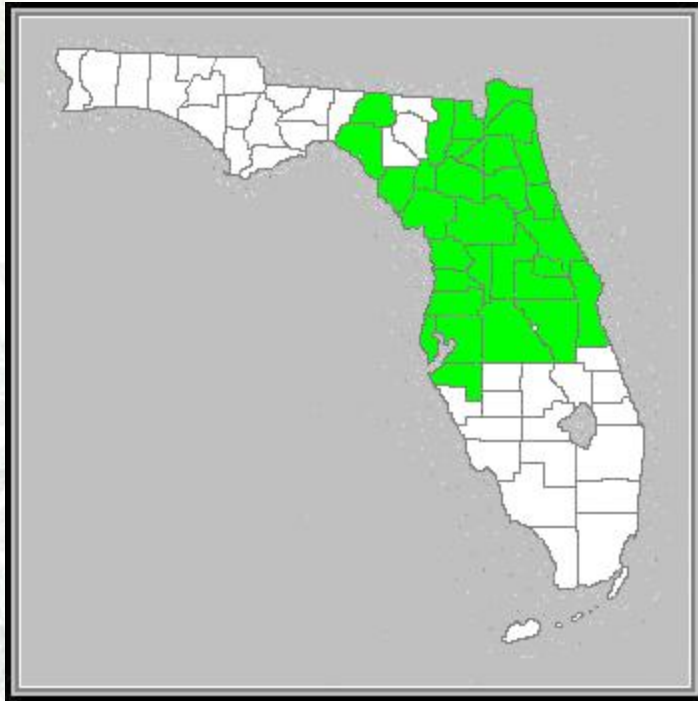
- The United States Department of Agriculture, NRCS, lists a total of nine species of the genus *Asimina* within the U.S. (discrepancy noted)

- The Atlas of Florida Vascular Plants identifies 16 species occurring in Florida, all of which are native.

The Academy of Natural Science, Philadelphia Herbarium



Species Distribution within Florida



(*vouchered – indicates that a fully documented dried specimen has been deposited in an approved herbarium)

- A perennial shrub native to central and north Florida, *Asimina pygmaea* (or *pygmea*) is *vouchered in approximately thirty-two Florida counties.
- Dwarf Pawpaw prefers Slash & Longleaf Pine-dominated flatwoods, Sandhill, and Scrub habitats, as well as disturbed areas.



Plant Structure and Life Cycle



This herbaceous perennial shrub first emerges in April and May from a strong taproot system. Before long before flowers begin to form.





The flowers are pale green and maroon. Each flower consists of two whorls of three petals each and the calyx has three sepals. Each flower has both male and female parts, which activate separately – preventing self-pollination. A single flower may contain several ovaries, allowing multiple fruit. The flower is nearly scentless, attracting the same array of pollinators as road kill – beetles, carrion flies & fruit flies.





Interestingly, the common name Pawpaw was derived from the tropical fruit papaya. Another common name is Gopherberry because the fruit is eaten by Gopher tortoises. The fruit is edible, but is ripe for a very short period of time before it begins to spoil.





Growing Conditions



to



- Full sun to partial shade

- Dwarf Pawpaw prefers well-drained sandy soil.
- Acid to neutral soil – 5.0 to 7.0 pH
- Good drought tolerance.
- Hardiness: USDA Zone 7a: to $-17.7\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ ($0\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$)
to USDA Zone 10b: to $1.7\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ ($35\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$)
- Flower and fruit production occur between April and June
- Height: 18-30 inch (46-76 cm)



Pollinators and Wildlife

Asimina pygmae is host plant to the Zebra Swallowtail butterfly, *Eurytides marcellus*, the young caterpillars are black with lighter colored transverse stripes. The most common older larvae is green with yellow and white transverse stripes. Chemicals from the Pawpaw may protect the butterfly from predatory birds.



Seed Collection and Propagation

The seeds of *Asimina pygmaea* are naturally sown when the fruit drops late in the season will remain dormant until they are stratified by the cold winter weather. The plant will emerge in the spring once the seed has sent down a taproot as long as ten inches.

Hardwood cuttings are near impossible to root, while softwood cuttings require an elaborate process.



Presentation References

- Biological and genetic relationships

University of Arizona [Tree of Life](#)

- United States distribution

[USDA](#) – Natural Resource Conservation Service

- Florida distribution

[Atlas of Florida Vascular Plants](#)

- Propagation & fruit production

[CRFG](#) - Pawpaw

- Growing conditions and general information

[Wikipedia](#) – genus *Asimina*



Presentation References (cont.)

- Larval Food Source – Host Plants

Biospherenursery.com

- FNPS – Natives for Landscaping

FNPS.org This Link will take you to the profile for this plant on the FNPS website

- [Florida Plants](#) by zone and habitat, use your county name or zip-code to see native habitat classifications and appropriate plants.



- For more in-depth study:

Best Native Plants for Southern Gardens: A Handbook for Gardeners, Homeowners, and Professionals. 2010. Gil Nelson. Gainesville: University Press of Florida. ISBN 978-0-8130-3458-4

Florida Butterfly Caterpillars and Their Host Plants. Marc C. Minno, Jerry F. Butler, and Donald W. Hall. 2005. Gainesville: University Press of Florida. ISBN 0813027896.

Native Florida Plants: Low Maintenance Landscaping and Gardening. Robert G. Haehle and Joan Brookwell. 2004 (revised edition). Taylor Trade Publishing. ISBN 1589790510.

