



PURPLE PASSIONFLOWER

Passiflora incarnata L.

plant symbol = PAIN6

Contributed By: USDA, NRCS, National Plant Data Center



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Oklahoma Biological Survey

Alternate names

Wild passionflower, maypop, apricot vine, old field apricot, Holy-Trinity flower, mayapple, molly-pop, passion vine, pop-apple, granadilla, maycock, maracoc, maracock, white sarsaparilla.

Uses

Ethnobotanic: The Houma, Cherokee and other Native American tribes used purple passionflower for food, drink, and medicinal purposes. Captain Smith, in 1612, reported that Native Americans in Virginia planted the vines for the fruits. The fruits were eaten either raw or boiled to make syrup. A beverage was made from the fruits by crushing and straining the juice. Sometimes the juice was thickened by mixing it with flour or cornmeal. The young shoots and leaves were eaten, cooked with other greens. The roots were used in an infusion to treat boils, and to “draw out inflammation” of wounds from briars or locusts. Babies were given a tea made from the roots to aid in weaning. The roots were beaten with warm water and used as eardrops to treat earaches. Root infusions were used to treat liver problems. Soaking the crushed roots in drinking water made a “blood

tonic.” The plant was also used as a sedative to treat nervous conditions and hysteria.

Wildlife: Purple passionflowers attract butterflies.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant’s current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

Weediness

This plant may become invasive in some regions or habitats and may displace desirable vegetation if not properly managed. Please consult with your local NRCS Field Office, Cooperative Extension Service office, or state natural resource or agriculture department regarding its status and use. Weed and invasive information is also available from the PLANTS Web site.

Description

General: Passionflower Family (Passifloraceae).

Purple passionflower is a native, perennial vine. The slightly pubescent vines climb with tendrils that arise from the axils of the leaves. The vines can range from 2 to 6 m long. The alternate leaves (6 to 15 cm long and wide) are palmate with 3 lobes and finely serrated margins. The spectacular flowers are pale-lavender or, rarely, white, with five petals (3 to 4 cm long, 4 to 7 mm wide) and five sepals (2.5 to 3.5 cm long). The complex flower has a “crown” or corona of numerous fringelike segments that arise from above the petals. The corona is white or lavender with purple bands. The reproductive parts are interestingly arranged and add to the exotic beauty of the flower. The unique appearance of the flowers was purported, by early Spanish explorers, to represent the sufferings of Christ (for a detailed description see Coffey 1993). The plants bloom from June to September. Sweet-smelling, yellowish fruits develop in two to three months after flowering and may be harvested from July to October. The pulpy fruit, or “maypop”, is large and oval, about the size of a hen’s egg (4 to 10 cm long). The fruit contains many flattened, dark-colored seeds (4 to 6 mm long) that are covered with an arillate pulp, which is the edible portion of the fruit.

Distribution: For current distribution, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

Habitat: Purple passionflower is common in open or cultivated fields, rocky slopes, thin woods, roadsides, fencerows and thickets.

Establishment

Purple passionflowers require direct sunlight for at least half of the day. The plants prefer fertile, well-drained soils but will grow in heavier clay soils. Pick a spot in the garden where the plants may either climb or spread freely. The plants may be propagated from seed or by cuttings. Seeds should be collected in the fall after the fruit has begun to shrivel. Mature seeds are brown in color with no traces of white. Wash the gelatinous covering from the seeds if they are to be stored for any length of time. It is best to plant the seeds directly into an outdoor seedbed. The seedlings may be transplanted after they have three or four leaves or, once established, they can be used to provide cuttings or divisions. Cuttings should be taken in the early spring. Remove the lower leaves from a 15 to 20 cm cutting before placing it in the rooting medium. Removing the suckers that develop around the established plants provides materials for propagating by division. With a shovel, separate and remove the suckers and roots. Transplant the divisions and water them immediately.

Management

To control the spread of purple passionflower, remove the suckers regularly. The vines may be trained onto a trellis, fence or tree trunk.

Control

This plant is listed as a invasive by several authoritative sources listed in the Plants Profile for this species at the PLANTS website. Please contact your local agricultural extension specialist or county weed specialist to learn what works best in your area and how to use it safely.

Always read the label and safety instructions for each control method. Trade names and control measures appear in this document only to provide specific information. USDA, NRCS does not guarantee or warranty the products and control methods named, and other products may be equally effective.

Cultivars, Improved and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

These plant materials are readily available from commercial sources.

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04oct01 jsp

For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS <<http://plants.usda.gov>> and Plant Materials Program Web sites <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>.

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