



TREE NEWS

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CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

FALL HARVEST OF YOUR URBAN FOOD FOREST

The potential of urban food forests transforming how we interact with the space we live in by integrating nature into our daily lives while promoting local food production is tantalizing. However, anyone who has had a fruit tree knows the struggle keeping up with them through pests, disease, and poor yields. Here, we spotlight three exceptional native, low-maintenance trees you should keep an eye out for over the next couple of months.



Paw Paw (*Asimina triloba*)

Paw Paw is a medium-sized tree and is the only member of its genus that grows outside of the tropics. When they ripen in September, the yellow-green fruit, roughly the size of an avocado, has a flavor similar to a banana. The fruit can eaten fresh or used to make bread or ice cream. Keep in mind though, while Paw Paw does like to form thickets through root sprouting, you will need more than one tree since they do not self-pollinate. Also, you'll have to beat the deer to the ripe fruit.



Pecan (*Carya illinoensis*)

A well-placed Pecan tree not only can provide an abundance of shade during our hot summers, but also a plethora of edible nuts during the fall. Placing an old bed sheet on the ground beneath the tree in mid-October into November is a nice passive way to gather your fill. While it does take a little effort to crack each nut, the sweet, buttery flavor makes it worth it. Just remember, Pecans need plenty of space to grow since they can get exceptionally large and have deep root systems.

American Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*)

Anyone who has bitten into an unripen persimmon fruit knows the feeling of their body trying to swallow its own face. Until they experience a frost, the high tannin content makes the fruit highly astringent. However, those who have had a soft, ripe Persimmon know how special they are. I pester my wife's friend every year for persimmon jam. On top of everything, the tree also has amazing fall color and a strikingly corky bark. The downside is only the female trees will produce fruit, and the fruit can be messy when they drop, so I'd avoid having them near sidewalks.

Conclusion

Paw Paw, Pecan, and Persimmon are great native trees with potential to fill multiple crucial roles in our urban environment, but we understand the hesitancy. No tree is zero-maintenance, and the fallen fruit can be a messy eye-sore to some people for a couple of weeks out of the year, but maybe it'll save you a walk to the convenience store the next time you want a snack and give you a moment to look at your community's potential.



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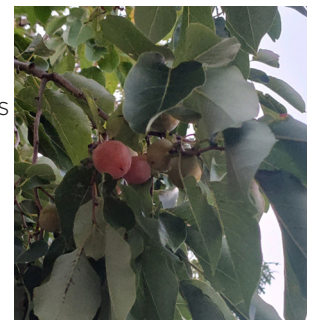
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