Blue Passion Flower  
*Passiflora caerulea*

Common Name: Blue Passion Flower

Family: Passifloraceae Juss. ex Kunth.

Country of Origin: Brazil to Argentina, naturalized in tropics

Description: In summer this frost hardy, fast-growing, 30 ft (9 m) evergreen or semi-evergreen climber produces beautiful flowers with pale pink petals, banded with blue or purple. These are followed by edible, but not especially delicious, egg-shaped, yellow fruit.

Culture: Very frost hardy to frost tender, they are best suited to warm areas. Plant in rich, well-drained soil in full sun and provide support. Water regularly in summer. Prune congested or overgrown plants in spring. Propagate from seed or cuttings or by layering in summer. They are susceptible to nematodes.

USDA Zone: 8-11

The exotic and beautiful passion vine originated in the tropical rain forest regions of the world. Passiflora is derived from Latin and means passion and flower. The Latin species name incarnata means flesh colored and alludes to part of the flower. Before 1900, the purple variety was partially naturalized and flourishing in coastal areas of Australia. Seeds of the fruit were brought from Australia to Hawaii and first planted in 1880. It wasn’t long, before it became popular in home gardens.

To attract pollinators, such as bees, moths, butterflies, other insects, bats, and hummingbirds, Passiflora have developed a wide variety of colorful, fragrant flowers. The fruits also contain a juice with a unique aromatic taste & smell.

There are over 400 hundred species in the genus Passiflora. Most are tender evergreen tropical vines which prefer a frost-free climate. Passiflora incarnata is an exception in that it is deciduous, can survive winter freezes, is native to the southeastern United States, and is commonly called maypop as well as passion flower. It is a fast-growing perennial vine which uses its tendrils to attach to fences, trees, or other supports, usually reaching heights of 10-20ft. Winter frosts will kill it back to the ground, but it will happily reappear in the spring, earning its name “may pop.”

Maypop is a wonderful addition to a butterfly garden. The gulf fritillary, zebra heliconia, and checkered fritillary butterflies lay their eggs on the leaves. After the eggs hatch out, caterpillars eat the leaves, and leave the plant quite ragged.

Reproduction is by seeds and root shoots. Cultivation may break apart and move root shoots to new areas. The edible fruit is called a Maypop

This plant is found throughout Florida on dry soils, especially along roadsides and in citrus groves and old fields. Its native range extends westward to Texas, eastward to Virginia and northward to Missouri. It was introduced further north from its previous southern range. It is also found in Bermuda.