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BOTANY

Ripe for a Comeback

Pawpaw propagators see a fruitful future

The largest tree fruit native to North America is about to get bigger, if members of the PawPaw Foundation have their way. Desmond R. Layne, professor of horticulture at Clemson University, wants more people to know the plant (right). "The pawpaw may be a good substitute crop for tobacco farmers," he says. "It's well adapted to the same soils and climate." The pawpaw tastes like a banana and was long a staple of Native American diets, but its merits are more than nutritional. The tree contains chemicals that work as natural insecticides, and researchers are optimistic about the fruit's potential in making anticancer drugs.



ART BY MARY E. EATON

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