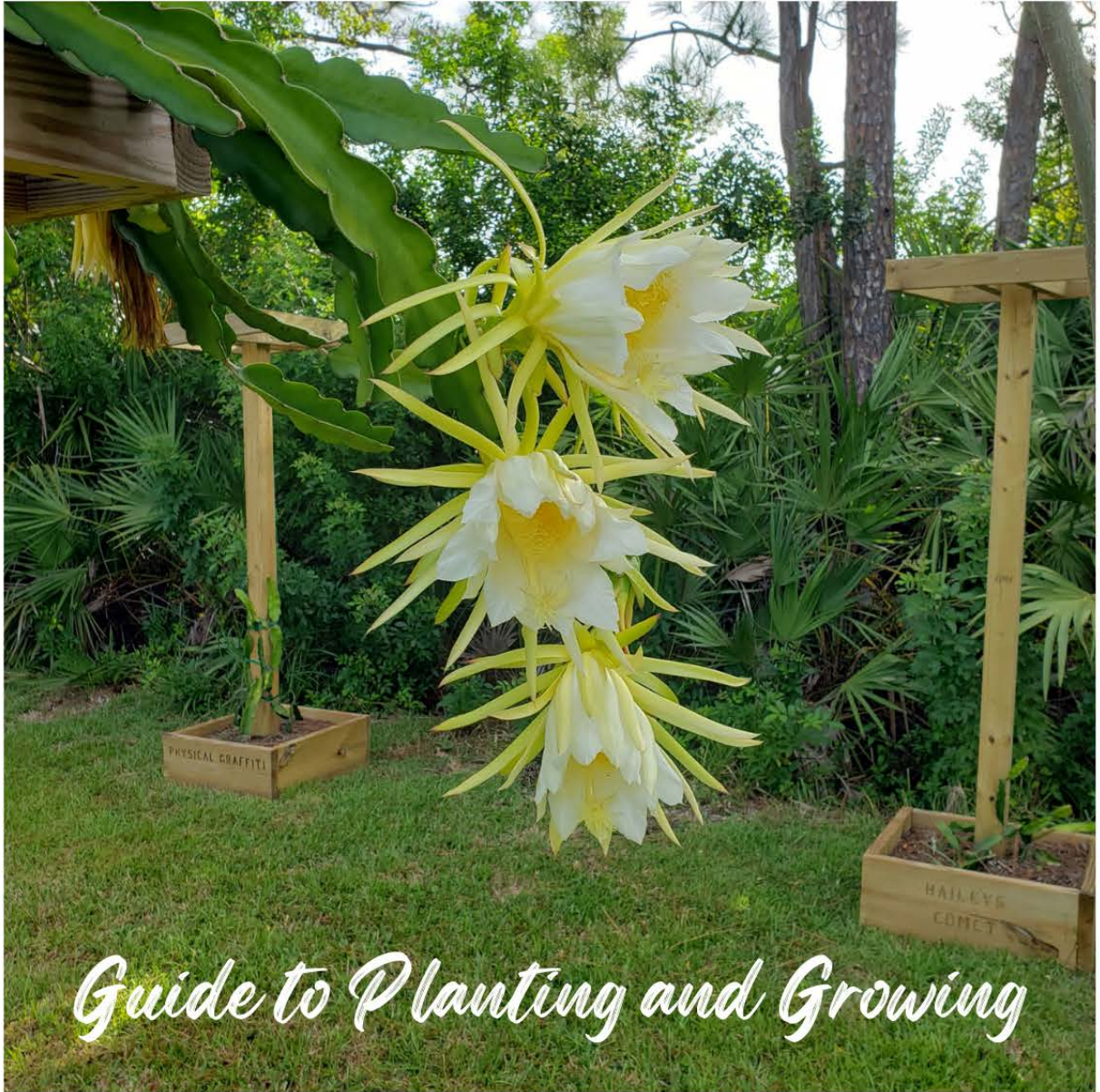


Dragon Fruit



Homestead2You.com

From our homestead to yours!

Available Varieties (from Homestead 2 You)

Godzilla



Originated in Japan. The long segment stems are relatively wide and like to curl as they grow. The flowers are self-sterile and need to be cross-pollinated. The round fruit has bright pink skin with dark fin tips that curl outwards making it look like a flower. The fruit has a juicy sweet tropical flavor. Average weight 1-2 Lbs.

American Beauty



Hylocereus Guatemalensis. With an impressive appearance both inside and out. *Hylocereus Guatemalensis*. With an impressive appearance both inside and out. It also has the flavor to back it up. The fruit size ranges from 0.75 to 1 pound and the flowers are self-pollinating. The stems have a heart-shaped rib that is very typical of Guatemalan varieties, with small spines. When the fruit is ripe, it has a round shape, the skin is a lighter pink with deep green **fins**.

Bloody Mary



Hylocereus Polyrhizus. This variety is very similar in color, size and taste to Jaina. The flowers seem to be self-fertile but cross pollination is recommended. The fruit exterior is redish Pink with lime-tippefins and has red flesh.

Halley's Comet



Hylocereus undatus and *Hylocereus Guatemalensis*. Proven to be a great producer and relatively fast grower. This variety can bloom all summer long and is self-pollinating but cross pollination with other varieties can yield even better results. The fruit has a pink skin with green fin tips and purple flesh. The flesh is Firm, Airy, Juicy, Sweet & Sour. Resemble sweet plum or Strawberry it is Very refreshing.

Physical Graffiti



Hylocereus Guatemalensis and Hylocereus Undatus. Also known as 1-S, a seedling developed by Paul Thomson. The 1-S is a cross between Rixford, a purple-fleshed Guatemalan variety, and Niezel, a white-fleshed undatus variety. This plant is an aggressive grower and a high producer. The flowers are self-sterile and need cross pollination to set fruit.

The large fruit has a pinkish red skin and light purple flesh. The sweet flesh has a rich complex of a lot of fruits, it is said to be exceptional. Average weight 0.75-1.5 Lbs.

Purple Haze



Hylocereus Guatemalensis and Hylocereus Undatus. Also known as 5-S a seedling developed by Paul Thomson. 5-S is a cross between Rixford a purple-fleshed variety, and Niezel, a white-fleshed variety. This plant is a fast grower and heavy producer. The flower seems to be self sterile and needs cross pollination to set fruit. The fruit has a pink skin with light green fins and a bright purple flesh. The fruit has a soft texture and a great Sweet & Sour balance, flavor resembles grape/Lychee combination.

Fuschia



The flowers are self-sterile and need to be cross pollinated. The oblong fruit has light pink skin with light green to pink fin tips. The fruit has a juicy sweet tropical flavor and develops some of the deepest fuschia color flesh. Average weight .25 to 1 Lbs.

Dragon Fruit Nutrition

In one 6-ounce serving of dragon fruit cubes, you'll get:

- Calories: 102
- Fat: 0 grams
- Protein: 2 grams
- Carbohydrates: 22 grams
- Fiber: 5 grams
- Sugars: 13 grams

You'll also get these vitamins and minerals:

- Vitamin A: 100 international units (IU)
- Vitamin C: 4 milligrams
- Calcium: 31 milligrams
- Iron: 0.1 milligram
- Magnesium: 68 milligrams

Dragon Fruit Health Benefits

Dragon fruit has many potential health benefits, including:

- It's rich in antioxidants like flavonoids, phenolic acid, and betacyanin. These natural substances protect your cells from damage by free radicals -- molecules that can lead to diseases like cancer and premature aging.
- It's naturally fat-free and high in fiber. It makes for a good snack because it can help keep you full for longer between meals.
- It may help lower your blood sugar. Researchers say this might be partly because it replaces damaged cells in your pancreas that make insulin, the hormone that helps your body break down sugar. But the studies were done on mice, not people. It's unclear just how much dragon fruit you'd have to eat to get these benefits.
- It contains prebiotics, which are foods that feed the healthy bacteria called probiotics in your gut. Having more prebiotics in your system can improve the balance of good to bad bacteria in your intestines. Specifically, dragon fruit encourages the growth of the probiotics lactobacilli and bifidobacteria. In your gut, these and other helpful bacteria can kill disease-causing viruses and bacteria. They also help digest food.
- It can strengthen your immune system. Dragon fruit is high in vitamin C and other antioxidants, which are good for your immune system.
- It can boost your iron levels. Iron is important for moving oxygen through your body and giving you energy, and dragon fruit has iron. And the vitamin C in dragon fruit helps your body take in and use the iron.

Dragon Fruit Health Risks

Dragon fruit is generally safe to eat, although studies have reported isolated allergic reactions. Symptoms include swelling of the tongue, hives, and vomiting. This type of reaction seems to be very rare.

If you eat enough red dragon fruit, it might turn your pee pink or red. This symptom looks more alarming than it actually is. The same thing can happen if you eat a lot of beets. Your pee should turn back to its normal color once the fruit is out of your system.

Growing Dragon Fruit

To successfully grow your own dragon fruit plant, you'll need to live in a warm and sunny region and have ample space in your garden—this is a heavy cactus, with a spreading habit and long stems.

Make sure it's planted far enough away from your home, electrical lines, and any other hazardous objects it could interact with.

It will also usually need to be supported by a strong trellis.

Trellis

Dragon fruit plants require a strong, sturdy trellis to grow up. Many growers choose to grow them up a pole (usually concrete, wood or PVC pipe) with a top support, to let them hang down which stimulates budding and creates the typical “umbrella canopy”.



Figure 1

This is what we have built, and it works quite well. However, there are many plans on the internet if this is not suitable for you or you want to grow in containers. Just Google “Dragon Fruit Trellis”.



Figure 2

Total Time to build: 2 to 3 hours.

Supplies:

- 8 ft 4x4 wood pressure treated
- 8 ft 2x12 wood pressure treated
- 12 ft 2x4 wood pressure treated
- Circular saw
- Hammer for nails or Drill for deck screws
- Nails (Size 10d qty=30) or Deck Wood Screws (#10 x 3-1/2"). I prefer the deck screws as they do not back out over time.

Prepare the cuts as follows:

- 8 ft 2x12 cut into 4 24-inch lengths.
- 12ft 2x4 cut into 6 24-inch lengths.
- Done with the saw, so put'er away.

Assembly:

- For the base you will create a 2x12x24 planter box. Use 3 screws or nails per joint.



Figure 3

For the top support:



Figure 4

- You want to center the 4x4 post between 2 of the 2x4 pieces. Use 3 nails or wood screws to attach each of these to the 4x4, flush with the end of the post
- Screw the remaining 4 2x4 pieces together to form a box (2 screws or nails at each joint).
- The center and attach the box to the 2 2x4's already attached to the post.

Yes, you could do this top support like this, and it is easier. But Dragon Fruit are heavy when mature and the center 2x4 is the weakest link here.



Figure 5

The build is complete.



Figure 6

- To install, bury the post 3 feet in the ground, all you want is 5 ft exposed above. The depth is also required to make sure the trellis does not lean or fall over due to weight of the plants or high winds when they are full grown.
- Dig the hole 3 foot deep, no less.
- Place the base planter box centered over the hole.

- Insert the post in the hole, pack it in firmly making sure it is plumb and level as possible. No need to concrete it in, just back fill and pack with the dirt from the hole. Water in the post to get the dirt to settle in as much as possible. If the post wiggles a bit give it a few days to settle in before planting.

Planting

- Fill the planter box 2/3 full of a good potting mix.
- The trellis can support up to 4 plants, place each plant on a different side of the 4x4, as close as possible to the post.
- When all 4 plants are in the planter, use garden tape or twine to light tie the plants to the post. The goal here is to train each plant up the post.
- You will need to tie off the new growth periodically as the plant grows further up.
- If you notice side shoots coming off the lower sections of a Dragon Fruit, trim these off as you want to develop a strong central stem all the way to the top.
- When the tip of a plant has reach 6 inches above the top support you need to cut off the last inch or two. This will cause it to begin branching out and develop the umbrella canopy.



Figure 7

Light

Although dragon fruit plants enjoy warm weather and are often planted in full sunlight, too much intense sun in dry or especially hot regions can cause stem damage. If temperatures in your area are frequently near 100 degrees Fahrenheit, it's best to plant your cactus in a spot that boasts partial shade. Likewise, it's important to be aware that too much shade can result in less abundant fruit production and the quality of your harvest may not be as impressive.

Soil

Dragon fruit cacti are not terribly fussy when it comes to their soil type or pH level. The key is that their soil is moist, rich in organic matter, and well-draining. Cacti experts also recommend mulching around the base of the plant—especially in drier regions—to help the soil retain its moisture.

Water

Don't make the mistake of thinking that because this plant is a cactus, you can slack on the watering front. While dragon fruit cacti do have some drought tolerance, in order to produce a good fruit crop, it's best to water them consistently from when they start producing their flowers until you harvest your dragon fruit crop. However, excessive watering can also result in root rot and various forms of fungal disease. During the winter and into early spring, give the plant a necessary dry spell to induce prolific flowering.

Temperature and Humidity

Dragon fruit plants are not suitable for every garden. Because they are native to tropical regions, they won't do well in areas that experience freezing weather, especially if that freeze is prolonged. Temperatures ranging from 65 degrees Fahrenheit to 80 degrees Fahrenheit are considered optimal growing conditions for dragon fruit cacti.

Fertilizer

Dragon fruit cacti are rather hungry plants and feeding them every couple of months during their first year, using a balanced 10-10-10 fertilizer, is recommended. Once the plants are well-established, they should do fine with just a few applications of fertilizer annually. You should also plan to amend the soil with compost or organic matter a couple of times a year, too.

Pruning

There are many ways to prune dragon fruit plants. For productive and manageable dragon fruit canopies growing on trellis systems, it is recommended that individual plants be initially pruned to encourage upward growth in the first year. As plants mature and branching stems hang or grow horizontally, pruning of dead stems and selective pruning of live stems for air flow is recommended.

Flowering and fruiting

Depending on species and varieties, the bell-shaped flowers are usually white or pink/red (and other colors) and can be up to 14 inches long and 9 inches wide. It has documented in other areas that flowers are pollinated by moths and bats. Flowers have the ability to self-pollinate, but because of self-incompatibility resulting in lack of fruiting (depending on species and variety), hand pollination is recommended for improved fruit production. Bees can also be pollinators in early daytime hours before flowers wither. Most dragon fruit species are long day plants where longer day (sunlight) periods are required for flowering and fruiting.