



Pineapple?...Nope. Guava?...Nope. Amazing?...Yes!
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A few short years ago, we were researching plants to create a shrub hedge and came across the usual ideas such as photinia, oleander, nandina, pyracantha, and then found something called pineapple guava. Our criteria included plantings which would thrive without too much pampering, not need a lot of water, and be deer resistant. And of course, as a hedge, we needed evergreen.

I can report that the hedge gets better every year. However, it's the pineapple guava that's so very exciting and I want to share what we've learned about this amazing plant. This shrub, sometimes trained as a tree, has so much to offer, and has no drawbacks! I'm surprised not to see more planted in our neighborhood.

Pineapple guava (previously *Acca sellowiana*, now *Feijoa sellowiana*) is native to South America but is also grown in Europe, can be found in both Ukraine and India, and is particularly popular in New Zealand. It's an easy-to-find plant in local nurseries and we've also picked up named varieties at the UC Davis Arboretum plant sale. From gallon-sized plants, we've seen ours reach about four feet tall in five years. As shrubs, The Sunset Western Garden Book projects them to reach up 18-25 feet. Here in El Dorado County, the plant will survive in both Sunset zones 7 and 9.

June, 2020

Above, I mentioned my basic research criteria--deer-resistance, not needing much water, and keeping foliage year-round. All criteria were met in the following four choices.

With photinia, we also get attractive changes in foliage color. With *Nerium oleander*, we see masses of continuous bloom through the summer and fall. *Nandina domestica* has an airiness to its slender canes with multi-color foliage and berries. Pyracantha is a berry-making machine that keep birds crazy happy. (However, photinia and oleander are toxic to animals and humans. Please research them before planting in your yard.) But, with the pineapple guava, we get so much more: striking white blossoms in the spring and in late fall, if conditions are right, fruit appears. Edible fruit!

On November 22, 2019 at 2:30 p.m. at our local grocery store, I spotted a stash of feijoa (the fruit of the pineapple guava) for sale at the princely sum of \$2.49 each! Of course I made gleeful noises and took a snapshot. We harvested hundreds and hundreds of feijoa from our shrubs last year. Woohoo! We could be rich! We also happily gave many feijoa fruit away.

I've been told the fruit is delicious. Literature says many people think they can taste some pineapple. Some guava. And a hint of mint. It's definitely an exotic and the list of what one can do with the fruit is limited only to the imagination. Recipes using feijoa include cakes, jams, and liqueurs. We had a blast making a variety of feijoa jams and butters and gifting them over the holidays. I still have enough in the freezer to try making some cakes or ice cream. The blossoms that will appear shortly, I've been told and have read, are like candy. Even better, plucking the petals does not impact fruit production. We can eat the yummy petals directly off the shrub, or do something grownup and toss them in salads.

Lastly, looking beyond the ornamental and edible, we find the Master Gardeners of Santa Clara County include pineapple guava on their list of fire-resistant plants for the landscape. (UCANR.edu and San Jose Mercury News August 17, 2017).

I hope your interest in the pineapple guava has been piqued. There is a "Feijoa Fact Sheet" at fruitsandnuts.ucdavis.edu. Also check out what California's rare fruit growers have to say at crfg.org.

Currently we are in phase 2 resumption of activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Master Gardener events will for the foreseeable future be limited. Please see our calendar of events for learning opportunities.

We realize our public classes are valued by County residents and we especially appreciate your continued support and understanding during this public health challenge. Have a gardening question? Master Gardeners are working hard remotely and can still answer your questions. Leave a message on our office telephone: 530-621-5512, or use the "Ask a Master Gardener" option on our website: mgeldorado.ucanr.edu. We'll get back to you! Master Gardeners are also on Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest.

Stay safe and follow recommended health and sanitation practices in the coming weeks.

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For more information on the UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County, see our website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. If you are looking for garden inspiration, while our garden is closed due to COVID-19, our website has pictures, plants lists and much more. http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Demonstration_Garden. To sign up for notices and newsletters, see http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news.

