

## *Pineapple Growing in the Home Landscape*

Corn, cacao-raw chocolate and tobacco are well known crops originally grown by indigenous people of the Americas then distributed by the new world explorers to Europe, Asia and Africa. Pineapples have also been grown for thousands of years in the subtropical areas of Central and South America and the Caribbean.

You can easily grow your own sustainable little garden area of pineapples here in South Florida. Choose an area of the yard that receives at least 6 hours of sun and has well draining soil. To start new plants, detach the top or crown from a ripe pineapple and let the top air dry in the shade for a day or two, then plant into the landscape. Because supermarket pineapples have spiny leaves you may want to select a spineless variety for the home yard. The spineless cultivars including 'Smooth Cayenne' one of the most widely grown pineapples in the world are recommended for planting in residential landscapes and is available from commercial nurseries and garden centers.

Plant pineapple plants 36 inches apart, this will allow the plant to produce large pineapple fruit. Concentrate on growing a vigorous, healthy pineapple plant for the first 14 to 16 months. Fertilize in small amounts frequently (every 6 to 8 weeks) and water during dry periods.

Pineapple plants can mature in 18 months and can flower when days get shorter or the weather gets cooler or a drought occurs. When fruiting begins it takes 7 months to ripen the fruit. For best possible fruit sweetness, pineapple fruit should be harvested when 1/3 to 2/3 or more of the skin shell color has turned from green to yellow.

Pineapple can be eaten fresh, juiced, dried and incorporated into cooked dishes and desserts. The fruit is a good source of potassium, vitamin C and vitamin A. For information on growing pineapple in your home landscape or seeing pineapples growing visit the University of Florida/IFAS Palm Beach County Cooperative Extension Service and Mounts Botanical Garden located at 531 North Military Trail West Palm. Monday-Friday 9am-4pm.

