

Passiflora incarnata L.

Standardized Common Name: Passionflower

Other Common Names: Apricot Vine, May Apple, Maypops, Wild Passionflower

Family: Passifloraceae

Taxonomy: *Passiflora* includes over 400 species of tropical vines, almost all native to the New World; *P. incarnata* is one of only a few species whose range extends to eastern North America.

Description: Deciduous perennial climbing vine, up to 10 m long. Stems herbaceous; thin tendrils borne in leaf axils, ending in spiral coils. Leaves alternate, stipulate, petiolate; stipules small, deciduous; petioles 1–4 cm long, grooved and sometimes twisted, with two glands at base of leaf blade; blade palmately 3(–5)-lobed, 6–15 cm long, about as long as broad; lobes ovate, separated by deep sinuses; leaf base broad, narrowing abruptly at petiole attachment; lobe apices acute; margins finely serrate; upper surface glossy, lower surface pubescent. Flowers andromonoecious (some bisexual, others functionally male), solitary on long stout pedicels, subtended by 3 bracts; bracts (3–)4–6(–8) mm long, margins serrate and glandular. Sepals 5, green below, white to lavender above, 2.5–3.5 cm long, with soft awn 1–5 mm long. Petals 5, white or lavender to bluish, usually shorter than sepals. Corona of numerous filaments; outer 1.5–3 cm long, white to pale lavender with darker purple color in wide band; inner 2–4 mm long. Sexual parts raised on a sturdy stalk (androgynophore). Anthers 5, yellow, to 1 cm long, hanging down from outward-spreading filaments; filaments thick, green,

dark-spotted. Ovary above anthers green, broadly ovoid, trilobular, with 3 long styles and bulbous stigmas; styles recurved in bisexual flowers or spreading upward in male flowers. Fruit a berry, green or yellowish to brownish, 4–7 cm, ellipsoid, unilocular at maturity; flesh edible and tasty, acidic; seeds ellipsoid, surrounded by arils, 4–6 mm long, brownish, with reticulate surface.

References:

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Radford AE, Ahles HE, Bell CR. *Manual of the Vascular Flora of the Carolinas*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press; 1968.

Vanderplank J. *Passion Flowers*, 3rd ed. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press; 2000.

Wunderlin RP. *Guide to the Vascular Plants of Florida*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida; 1998.

Parts in Commerce: Whole herb, collected at time of flowering and fruiting

Identification: Reproductive parts should be sought out in the material for better confirmation of identity.

Stems

- Usually about 5 mm thick; not at all woody, often hollow, with weak longitudinal striations
- Glabrous or weakly pubescent with tiny hairs
- With slender green tendrils ending in spiral coils

Leaves

- Petioles long, grooved, with two nectary glands at apex
- 6–15 cm long, about as broad as long, deeply 3-lobed (rarely 5-lobed)
- Lobes ovate to broadly lanceolate; blade divided for well over half the length of the leaf
- Base broad and flat with rounded corners, terminating in a point formed by the fusion of the 3 main veins with the petiole
- Lobe apices acute
- Margins shallowly and inconspicuously serrate
- Primary veins 3, palmately radiating into leaf lobes; secondary venation branching pinnately from the main veins
- Upper surface dark green, glossy; lower surface pubescent with short hairs
- Taste weak, sometimes slightly bitter

Flowers

- 5–9 cm in diameter, with extra whorl of colorful filaments above perianth, and with stamens and ovary raised above receptacle on a stalk-like androgynophore
- Subtended by 3 bracts; bracts 4–8 mm long, serrate, glandular
- Sepals 5, 25–35 mm long, spreading; green below, white to pale mauve or lavender above, with soft awns 1–3(–5) mm long
- Petals 5, slightly shorter than sepals, spreading; white to pale lavender
- Corona of numerous spreading filaments, longest often exceeding perianth; white to pale lavender at bases and apices, central portions heavily spotted with dark purple; tips of longer filaments usually hooked
- Androgynophore green with darker spots
- Anthers 5, ca. 1 cm long, pale yellow, hanging horizontally from underside of broad green, dark-spotted filaments
- Ovary green, ovoid; styles 3, long, usually bent down, with swollen stigmas

Fruit (at maturity)

- Elliptical, somewhat flattened, 4–7 cm long
- Lime green to yellowish or brownish
- Outer layer tough; flesh soft, edible
- Seeds 4–6 mm long, elliptical, brownish, with bumpy surface

Adulterants: *Passiflora incarnata* is occasionally confused with other cultivated species of *Passiflora*. *Passiflora edulis* Sims (Purple Granadilla, known for its delicious fruits) bears considerable resemblance to *P. incarnata*. Distinguishing features include the following:

- Stem thicker, tougher
 - Leaves sometimes to 25 cm long and broad
 - Young leaves often unlobed
 - Serrate leaf margins with teeth small but more prominent than in *P. incarnata*, areas of margin beneath teeth slightly rounded
 - Bracts subtending flowers ca. 2.5 cm long
 - Filaments purple in basal third; outer portions white, crinkled
 - Fruit purple at maturity, subglobose; seeds 3–4 mm long
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Figure 51: *Passiflora incarnata*.