

2018

DELAWARE

NURSERY & LANDSCAPE ASSOCIATION

Plant of the Year

This year marks Delaware Nursery & Landscape Association's Twenty-Fourth Annual Plant of the Year selection. The 2018 Herbaceous plant is *Dryopteris marginalis*. The 2018 Woody plant is *Asimina triloba*. These plants were chosen because they are particularly well suited to thrive in Delaware.

Dryopteris marginalis Marginal Wood Fern

This east coast native forms tidy clumps and can be easily identified by the spores along the outermost edges of the fronds. Leathery leaves are evergreen and twice compound resulting in a lacy texture. Leaves are blue-green on the upper surface with a light green underside and reach a height of 18 to 30 inches. Marginal wood fern requires good drainage and grows best in shade or partial sun. It tolerates dry shade and like all ferns is deer tolerant. It is extremely cold hardy, but may need a protected location to keep the evergreen fronds looking good. Stands of marginal wood fern provide valuable habitat to small wildlife. The dramatic feathery foliage makes marginal wood fern a great accent for a shade garden or in the right conditions, a lush, verdant groundcover.



Photo courtesy of Rick Darke

Asimina triloba Common Pawpaw

Common pawpaw is a small to medium sized tree or large multi-stemmed shrub (10-40 feet tall). It is native to the eastern United States, but has an exotic feel due to large, tropical-looking foliage. Pawpaw is the northernmost member of a primarily tropical family (Annonaceae; Custard Apple Family). Thick, bright-green leaves turn yellow-green for interesting fall color. Purple, six-petaled flowers are borne singly in leaf axils in early spring before leaves emerge. They



Photo courtesy of Rick Darke

are not particularly showy, but reward the keen observer as a harbinger of spring. Fruit are large, cylindrical and edible. They have a soft texture and flavor often described as strawberry banana-like. Fruit aren't commercially available because they bruise easily and do not withstand shipping. So, if you want to taste pawpaw, you need to grow one. Pawpaws make an excellent grove-forming understory tree. They provide food for birds, butterflies and small mammals and give an exotic touch to a native garden.



Photo courtesy of Rick Darke