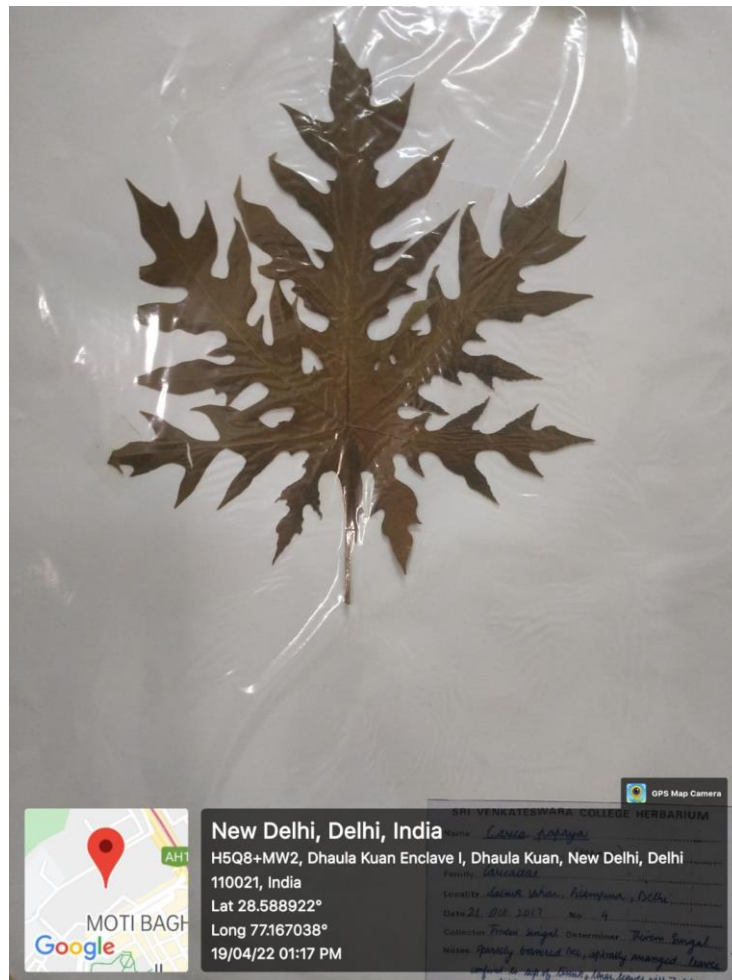


Carica papaya



Common Name: Papita, Papaya

Scientific Name: *Carica papaya*

Family: Caricaceae

The papaya is a small, sparsely branched tree, usually with a single stem growing from 5 to 10 m tall, with spirally arranged leaves confined to the top of the trunk. The lower trunk is conspicuously scarred where leaves and fruit were borne. The leaves are large, 50–70 cm in diameter, deeply palmately lobed, with seven lobes. All parts of the plant contain latex in articulated laticifers. Papayas are dioecious.

Economic Importance: Pipe fruits are consumed fresh as a breakfast fruit or in mixed fruit salads or may be made into juice, pickles, preserves or jellies. The immature fruits can be cooked as vegetables, and if tapped yield a latex that on drying gives a greenish-grey powder, commercially known as papain. The papain is used in canned meats and in meat-tenderising preparations as well as in pharmaceuticals as a mild laxative. Papain is also used in the manufacture of chewing gum, in the leather industry for treating hides and in the textile industry, where it prevents shrinkage of wool and silks. Finally, it is a component of some toothpaste for curing pyorrhoea, a disease of gums.