

TROPICALS TO GROW IN FORT BEND COUNTY & ACROSS OUR AREA

By DEBORAH BIRGE

[Fort Bend County Master Gardener](#)

Fort Bend County has become warmer over the past few decades. As a girl, the most tropical fruit my parents grew was a kumquat. Now, we grow a wide array of citrus fruits. And we have moved from protecting them in containers to planting them in the ground.



Most of FBC and surrounding areas are alkaline soil of heavy clay. For this reason, growers are encouraged to plant citrus on berms or in raised beds. In addition to citrus, gardeners have moved into growing the more tropical fruits such as (pictured above l to r) banana, avocado, passion fruit, and guava.

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It has become a common sight to see papaya trees (flower/fruit pictured) towering over back fences. With strategic site planning, gardeners can add mango, pineapple and passion fruit into their gardens.

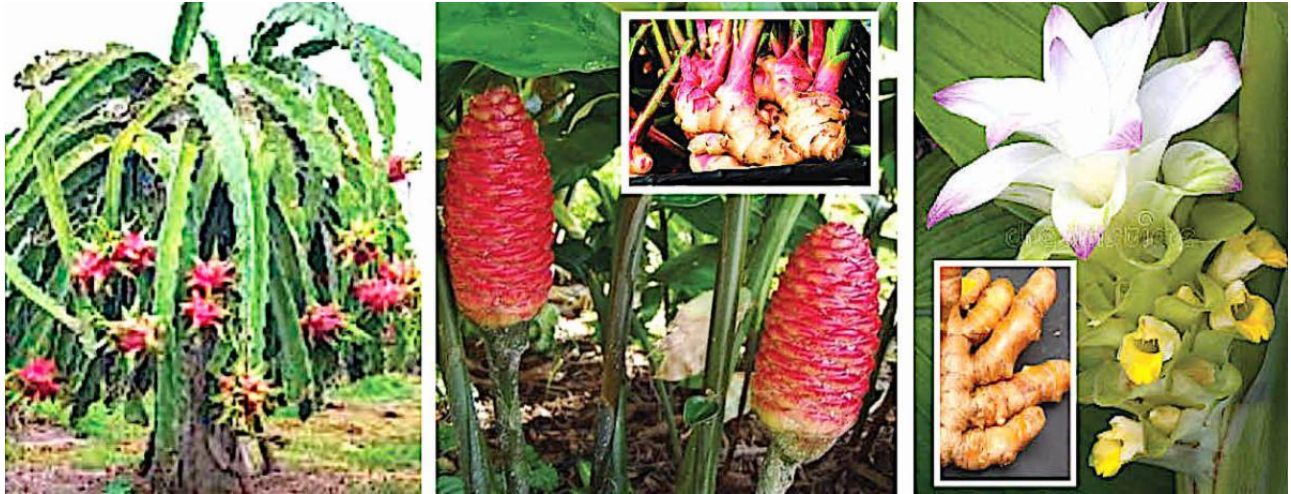
Less common but still doable (l to r below) are the carambola or star fruit, cherimoya or custard apple, jaboticaba, mangosteen, sapodilla, soursop, and white sapote. These fruits are best cultivated in containers and will need protection in winter. This can be a trip to the garage or a wrapping of insulation.



L to r, above: carambola (starfruit), cherimoya (custard apple), and jaboticaba. Below: mangosteen, sapodilla, soursop, and white sapote.

All the plants listed in this article need the same consideration as an apple or peach tree would require. Given rich, well-draining soil, sunlight, and irrigation, they will grow well and provide you with delicious, unusual fruit.

Some tropical fruits are easily grown but need hand pollinating such as the pitaya or dragon fruit. The blooms are utterly breathtaking, the thorns demand respect, but the blooms...



L to r, dragon fruit (plant/flower pictured at top of column), ginger zingiber and turmeric

Two of the more exotic herbs being grown are:

- Ginger zingiber. This ginger is easily cultivated and can be removed from the container when needed, broken off and returned to continue growing. It does go dormant in the winter so it is best to let it stay on the very dry side until spring to avoid rot.
- Turmeric or *Curcuma longa* is not only a beautiful flowering plant but has the bonus of rhizomes that can be dried and powdered into turmeric. They begin to grow with the warm, wet summers but are ready for dormancy in winter.