

Passion Vine – Reprinted from Friends of Hagerman NWR Weekly Blog, November 2, 2017 (by Judy Wilkins)

Passiflora incarnata, commonly known as Maypop or purple Passion Flower, is a fast-growing, woody, perennial vine with unusual blossoms. The Maypop is one of the hardiest species of Passion Flower and is common as a wildflower in the southern United States.



The plants grow in full sun and need direct sunlight for at least half of the day and have a high drought tolerance. The best soils for *P. incarnata* are well-drained but the plants tolerate occasionally wet and acidic soils. It takes a year or two before maypops begin bearing and each flower has a very short life (about one day) and the fruit ripens in two to three months. The fleshy fruit is an oval yellowish berry about the size of a hen egg. It is green at first, but then becomes orange as it matures. The egg-shaped green fruit ‘may pop’ when stepped on – thus its common name. Seeds can be collected in the fall after the fruit has shriveled.



Maypop and other passion flowers are the exclusive larval host plants for the Gulf Fritillary (photo at left below, by Jim West) and non-exclusive for the Variegated Fritillary (at right below, photo by Lindsey Hill) and the Zebra Longwing butterflies.



All season long we have been finding Fritillary caterpillars on the passion vines in the Butterfly Garden at Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge.

The flowers also seem to be perfectly suitable for bumblebee pollination, shown in photo below, by Mary Karam. As the bees look for nectar the pollen-filled flower anthers brush the back of the bee and when the bee moves to the next flower the pollen is readily transferred.



Photo credits: Dana Crites, Jim West, Lindsey Hill, Mary Karam