

Collecting Sapotes (*Pouteria spp.*), Sapodilla (*Manilkara zapota*) and Caimito (*Chrysophyllum cainito*) on the Pacific Coast of Costa Rica and Nicaragua

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The sapotes, sapodilla and caimito are all members of the family Sapotaceae native to Central America. These fruit are important local commodities throughout Tropical America, and with sapodilla, in Tropical Asia as well. These crops have considerable potential in the Americas and throughout the tropical world as local and export commodities; however, considerable obstacles remain in terms of horticultural management. Furthermore, genetic resources are poorly understood and generally lacking for the systematic development of these crops. Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden (FTBG) located in Coral Gables, FL, USA has been active in the collection of these crops for the last decade throughout Central America. Collecting has intensified in the last two years with a concentration on collaborating with local contacts in Costa Rica and Nicaragua who are directly involved in the harvesting and marketing of the local fruit. Such collaborations have allowed for the identification, collection and importation of superior selections of each of these crops, nearly exclusively from seedling trees within home gardens on the Pacific Coast of Costa Rica and Nicaragua. New collections of the sapotes have concentrated on 3 species (*P. sapota*, *P. viridis*, *P. fossicola*) and possibly hybrids among them. Emphasis has been placed on selections for the fresh market with superior production, fruit quality and horticultural traits of the tree. With sapodilla an emphasis has been placed on the selection of superior fresh fruit and also trees with superior horticultural traits. Caimito collections have been more modest due to difficulty in propagation, and the emphasis has been on the selections of superior fresh fruit. Collections have also been made of other species in the Sapotaceae with potential as rootstocks for commercial use.