

## Loquat and Tropical Fruit Trees

**Loquat, Japanese Plum** *Eriobotrya japonica* Family: Rosaceae Origin: China

**Season:** Small to medium sized, well-shaped rounded tree. Large 10-12 long, stiff leaves, dark green above, whitish underneath. Yellow to orange color fruit, somewhat pear-shaped, 2 long and 1 1/2 across with 1 to 3 seeds. Moderately fast growth, salt tolerant for coastal plantings.

**Location:** Loquats are wind tolerant and grow best in full sun, but also do well in partial shade. The round headed trees can be used to shade a patio. Loquats also make attractive espaliers. Fruit may be thinned to increase size. Many varieties. The loquat should really be used more, the fruit is especially good just eaten out of hand or in poultry casseroles. Harvest: Loquat fruits should be allowed to ripen fully before harvesting. They reach maturity in about 90 days from full flower opening. When ripe the fruit develops a distinctive color, depending on the cultivar, and begins to soften. Unripe fruits do not ripen properly off the tree and are excessively acid. Harvest time in Texas is from March to May. The fruit is difficult to separate from the cluster stems without tearing and must be carefully clipped individually or the whole cluster removed and the fruit then snipped off. Ripe fruit may be stored in the refrigerator for 1 to 2 weeks.

The orange fruit resembles an apricot when it is ready for picking because of its orange color. The loquat is comparable to the apple in many aspects, with a high sugar, acid and pectin content. It is eaten as a fresh fruit and mixes well with other fruits in fresh fruit salads or fruit cups. Firm, slightly immature fruits are best for making pies or tarts. The fruits are also commonly used to make jam, jelly and chutney, and are delicious poached in light syrup. Loquats can also be used to make wine.

**Fertilizing:** Loquats benefit from regular, light applications of nitrogen fertilizers, but too much nitrogen will reduce flowering. A good formula is organic Espoma fertilizer is 1 lb. of 4-2-6 Fruit Tree food four times a year during the period of active growth (Mar.-Oct.) for each tree 3 to 4 feet in height Irrigation: Loquat trees are drought tolerant, but they will produce higher quality fruit with regular, deep watering. The trees should be watered at the swelling of blossoms and 2 to 3 waterings should be given during harvest time. The trees will not



tolerate standing water. The plant, too, deserves more attention because it's a lovely hold-leaved green beauty. Occasionally infestations of black scale may appear. Fire blight caused by *Erwinia amylovora* bacterium is a major enemy of the loquat in Texas, particularly in areas with late spring and summer rains or high humidity. The disease is spread by bees during flowering. Fire blight can be controlled somewhat by the use of preventive fungicides (Monterrey or bactericides and by removal of the scorched-looking branches, cutting well into live wood. The prunings should be burned or sealed in a plastic bag before disposal. Crown rot caused by *Phytophthora* and cankers caused by *Pseudomonas* are also occasional problems.

**Barbie** - New variety from Israel, Large golden-orange oval fruit, very sweet, full size 12-15 ft. tree, self-fertile

**Ed's Delight Loquat** - Large excellent fruit quality. One of customers (Florida) named "Ed" tried this fruit and said "what a delight." Lg. round ping-pong all size, gold outside & white flesh inside, very sweet, full size 12-15 ft. tree, self-fertile

**Premier Loquat** - is a dwarf tree with high production making a great container item. The fruit when dark orange is very sweet, when it is eaten more to the yellow side it is still excellent but with a slight tartness.



**Miracle Fruit (*Synsepalum dulcificum*)** This shrub is native to West Africa and fruits when only 1 or 2 feet tall. At maturity it will reach seven feet. Miracle fruit produces small red fruits several times each year. The "miracle" is that if lemon or other sour fruit is eaten after the miracle fruit, the sour fruit tastes sweet. A natural chemical in the fruit masks the tongue's sour taste buds so that lemons taste like lemonade or lemon pie! The sweet sensation lasts from 20 minutes to 2 hours. Miracle fruit is frost sensitive, and requires partial shade. It is an excellent choice for a containerized tree, which gives it the added benefit of mobility.

The **Black Sapote (*Diospyros digyna*)**, is a species of persimmon that is native to eastern Mexico and Central America south to Colombia. Other names include **Chocolate Pudding Fruit, Chocolate Persimmon** and (in Spanish) **Zapote Prieto**. Black Sapote fruit are tomato-like and measure 2-4 inches in diameter, with an inedible skin that turns from olive to a deep yellow-green when ripe and a pulp which is white and inedible when unripe but assumes a flavor, color and texture often likened to chocolate pudding when ripe. Fruits usually contain seeds, up to a maximum of 12. The texture has been likened to that of a papaya. Black Sapote trees are adapted to tropical and warm subtropical areas and may be planted from sea level to an altitude of about 6,000 ft. Trees are not cold tolerant with young trees damaged or killed at or below 30°F (-1°C) and mature trees at or below 28°F (-2°C). Black Sapote is reported to be flood tolerant but only moderately drought tolerant.



**Sapodilla (*Manilkara zapota*)**, also known as nispero or chico sapote, this member of the Sapotaceae family is native to the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico and Central America. Now we have incredible cultivars that are oval or football shaped, that have the texture of a fine pear, and the tree size can be tailored to an individual's particular needs. The flavor of sapodilla appeals to almost everyone, and it can best be described as a pear that has been soaked in brown sugar. They are best served fresh and chilled, and then they can be halved or cut into wedges. The sapodilla prefers a sunny, warm, preferably frost free location. They are highly wind tolerant and can take salt spray. Sapodillas are well adapted to many types of soil. It thrives in very



poor soils but flourishes also in deep, loose, organic soil, as well as light clay, sand or lateritic gravel, but good drainage is essential. The tree tolerates dry conditions remarkably well. The sapodilla prefers a sunny, warm, preferably frost free location. They are highly wind tolerant and can take salt spray.

**Carambolas** or **Star Fruit (*Averrhoa carambola*)** have been cultivated in southeast Asia (e.g., Malaysia, India, Sri Lanka) for centuries, and trees were introduced in Florida over 100 years ago. Fruit from the first introductions into Florida were tart. More recently, seeds and vegetative material from Thailand, Taiwan, and Malaysia have been introduced and sweet cultivars have been selected. The carambola tree is small to medium in height 8 to 14 ft; and spreading, 6 to 10 ft. in diameter, and single or multi-trunked. Carambola trees are evergreen, although when grown in cooler locations, they lose some or all of their leaves during the late winter and early spring. The fruit is a fleshy, 4- to 5-celled berry with a waxy surface. Fruit are 2 to 6 inches in length, with 5 (rarely 4-8) prominent longitudinal ribs. They are star-shaped in cross section. The fruit skin is thin, light to dark yellow, and smooth, with a waxy cuticle. The improved **Sri Kembangan variety** is bright Yellow-orange, sweet, large size (4 - 6 inches in length and 3 - 4 inches wide) with very few seeds. The pulp is light to dark yellow in color, translucent, crisp, very juicy, and without fiber. Desirable varieties have an agreeable, sub-acid to sweet flavor. Fruit are sweetest when allowed to ripen on the tree. It takes about 60 to 75 days from fruit set to maturity depending upon variety, cultural practices, and weather.



The **Strawberry** or **Cattley Guava (*Psidium cattleianum*)** is a very attractive, cold hardy and undemanding small tree growing if unpruned to about 12-14 ft high, with glossy deep green evergreen leaves. New growth is reddish, which adds to the attractiveness of the tree and it has a handsome reddish-brown bark which peels. 1-2" fruits are produced from late spring to autumn from 1" white flowers, they are round, with a shiny reddish or yellow color. The pulp has many hard seeds and the flesh has a pleasant sweet to sub-acid flavor. Fruits can be eaten fresh or used in jellies, jams, juices and drinks. Red-skinned fruits have white flesh more or less reddish near the skin. Cattleya guavas make excellent landscape small trees, but also are easily grown and fruited in large containers. Growth rates are usually about two to four feet a year under good conditions. Trees should be fertilized in the landscape two to three times a year with a balanced fertilizer. Young trees may require some pruning to keep them desirably shaped. However, older trees require little attention. Cattley Guava is shallow-rooted but in spite of that, it is drought tolerant.

The **Guava (*Psidium guajava*)** is well known throughout the tropics, many people are familiar with it because of the large number of products made from this aromatic fruit. The plant is well distributed throughout the tropics and subtropics. This is a low growing tree up to 12-15 feet high and about the same spread. Fruit size and shape is variable – from 2 to 4 inches across, from round to oblong and even pear-shaped. Guavas typically have very thin skins, easily bruised, so they have to be handled carefully when being shipped. In shape, size and other characteristics, the fruits of the numerous varieties are extremely variable. In color, the skin may be greenish white, yellowish, or pink. Flesh color inside ranges from light to dark pink or white with the pink-fleshed varieties having less acid than the white-fleshed. In flavor, varieties range from sweet to slightly tart, all with the characteristic musky flavor and odor of the guava more or less pronounced. **Two popular varieties include Barbie Pink and Peruvian White.** Most varieties bear many seeds embedded in the soft pulp of the center, there are a few varieties that are almost seedless. Upon ripening, the fruit becomes soft and juicy. It may be eaten fresh, made into a juice or nectar contain fruit pulp, or made into preserves, jam, jelly, or paste. The guava is an excellent source of vitamins C and A. Guava can make a nice container fruiting specimen, plants start blooming and producing fruit when they are as small as 1 gal pot size. It responds well to pruning and can be kept in compact bushy shape. **In fact, Guava is probably the most popular container fruit tree among tropical plant growers.**



The **Mysore Raspberry (*Rubus albescens*)**, also called **Snowpeaks, Ceylon** or **Hill raspberry** is a large shrub sometimes achieving heights in excess of 15 feet. The 2 to 4 inch leaves are dark green above and white or light green on the underside. The long white canes, rachis, petiole and midrib all have sharp curved spines or thorns. The 5-petaled, pink to red purple flowers occurs on axillary and terminal clusters. The fruit turns from red to purple and black when ripe. Clusters can contain more than a dozen ripe pleasant black raspberry fruits. The plant spreads by tips of the long canes that bend down to the ground and root. Where cultivated in Hawaii, young tip rooted plants are usually

placed 3 to 6 feet apart in rows where a trellis and wire is used to keep the canes upright and facilitate harvesting. Rows are spaced from 7 to 9 feet apart. Pruning is employed to keep the canes from growing to excessive lengths and from touching soil where they will root and spread. Harvested branches are removed, as are old canes. This insures fresh growth and production the following year. Two to 4 ounces of Espoma 4-2-6 fertilizer should be applied every other month during the first growing season year followed by 4 to 6 ounce applications same frequency in subsequent years.

