Loquat, *Eriobotrya japonica*, sometimes called Japanese plum or Japanese Medlar, is an attractive small tree or shrub that is frequently planted in landscapes as an ornamental in Louisiana. The tree has large thick evergreen leaves, a moderate rate of growth and does well in most well-drained soils. It can be used as an edible landscape plant.

The oval fruit is pale yellow to orange and usually about an inch long in ornamental types but may be up to 2 inches long in some named varieties. The flesh is similar to a peach and surrounds several seeds. Fruit harvested as it starts to turn yellow makes excellent jellies, jams and pies. Loquat pies have a flavor similar to cherry pies. Fruit that has fully ripened and is slightly soft is sweet and can be eaten fresh.

Most loquats obtained from nurseries are seedlings and vary in fruit quality. Fruit from seedling trees are sweet but may be small. Several improved varieties are available, but these are hard to find and can usually be found only at nurseries that specialize in exotic fruits. Big Jim and MacBeth are two varieties that have done well in south Louisiana. The varieties Oliver and Premier have had fire blight problems in south Louisiana. Most loquat varieties are self-pollinating, but a pollinator variety improves fruit set. Champagne and Advance are reported to be non self-fertile. Gold Nugget, Thales and Tanake are additional varieties that could be tried on a trial basis.

Seeds germinate easily if they are taken from the fruit, washed and planted immediately. Seedling trees are not identical to the parent tree. Seedling trees usually take eight to 10 years to produce fruit. Trees produced by layering or grafting usually produce fruit within five years. Cleft grafting is often successful on loquats.

Loquats are adapted to most soil types as long as there is good drainage. They are also tolerant of dry conditions although tipburn of the leaves can occur during hot, dry periods. Weed control is important; loquats do not compete well with weeds and turfgrass. Removing competing vegetation 2 or 3 feet from the base of the tree is beneficial.

Loquats produce white fragrant flowers in the fall and early winter. Small green fruit are produced and hang on the trees until spring when they enlarge and ripen.

The fruit can be killed by temperatures in the low 20s during the winter and by temperatures in the upper 20s while in bloom and after the fruit begins growth in the spring. Fruit will sometimes continue to develop after seeds are killed although fruit will be smaller. Big Jim has produced thumb-size fruit without a live seed in the fruit.

A fruit crop normally occurs about every three to four years in north Louisiana. Fruit production is usually more frequent farther south and will likely occur most years in south Louisiana. Some loquat fruit production has occurred in north Louisiana the last six years because of the mild winters.

Planting trees in protected areas on the south side of buildings, near rivers and lakes and under tall pines where they can receive at least half a day of sun may increase the chances of fruit surviving the winter.

Plants are normally hardy to 10 degrees, but the large leathery evergreen leaves can sometimes suffer significant cold damage at slightly higher temperatures. A few plants have been killed at temperatures around 5 degrees.

Loquats are related to apples and pears and have few pests and diseases. Fire blight is the most destructive disease and can sometimes be a significant problem. Pruning out diseased limbs often gives adequate control. Do not fertilize heavily since that can increase fire blight damage. An application of one pound of 8-8-8 fertilizer per inch of trunk diameter during March is adequate in most Louisiana soils. Fertilizer may be split into March and late May or early June applications in sandy soils or soils where severe runoff could occur.

Loquats are basically low maintenance plants that have little requirement for fertilizer, irrigation, pesticide and pruning.

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https://www.lsuagcenter.com/articles/connected/growing-loquats-in-louisiana