

# *Eriobotrya japonica*: Loquat<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

The dense, rounded, dark green canopy of loquat is decorated in USDA hardiness zones 8b through 11 in late winter and spring with clusters of apricot yellow, pear-shaped, edible furry fruits. Fruit rarely sets further north. Loquat is a rapidly-growing evergreen tree and can reach 20 to 30 feet in height in the shade but is frequently seen 15 feet tall with a 15- to 25-foot-spread in a sunny location. The 8- to 12-inch-long leaves are rusty-colored beneath and have a coarse texture. Fragrant clusters of creamy white flowers are produced in fall, followed by the delicious, brightly colored, winter fruit.

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Eriobotrya japonica*

**Pronunciation:** air-ee-oh-BOT-ree-uh juh-PAWN-ih-kuh

**Common name(s):** loquat

**Family:** *Rosaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 8A through 11 (Figure 2)

**Origin:** native to China and Japan

**UF/IFAS Invasive Assessment Status:** caution, may be recommended but manage to prevent escape (Central, South); not considered a problem species at this time, may be recommended (North)

**Uses:** hedge; trained as a standard; urban tolerant; street without sidewalk; deck or patio; screen; fruit; specimen; espalier; container or planter; highway median



Figure 1. Full Form—*Eriobotrya japonica*: loquat

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Figure 2. Range

## Description

**Height:** 20 to 30 feet

**Spread:** 30 to 35 feet

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical

**Crown shape:** round

**Crown density:** dense

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** coarse

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** pectinate, serrate

**Leaf shape:** oblong, elliptic (oval)

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** broadleaf evergreen, evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** 8 to 12 inches

**Leaf color:** dark green on top, paler green with a rusty pubescence underneath

**Fall color:** no color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristics:** showy; fragrant; emerges on long terminal panicles that are covered in a rusty pubescence

**Flowering:** fall

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round, oval

**Fruit length:** 1 to 3 inches

**Fruit covering:** fleshy pome

**Fruit color:** orange-yellow

**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; showy; fruit/leaves a litter problem

**Fruiting:** late winter to early spring



Figure 3. Leaf—*Eriobotrya japonica*: loquat



Figure 4. Flower—*Eriobotrya japonica*: loquat



Figure 5. Fruit—*Eriobotrya japonica*: loquat

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/branches:** branches droop; not showy; typically one trunk; no thorns

**Bark:** gray, brown, somewhat patchy, and exfoliating

**Pruning requirement:** needed for strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** gray

**Current year twig thickness:** thick

**Wood specific gravity:** unknown



Figure 6. Bark—*Eriobotrya japonica*: loquat  
Credits: Gitta Hasing

## Culture

**Light requirement:** full sun to partial shade

**Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

## Other

**Roots:** not a problem

**Winter interest:** yes

**Outstanding tree:** no

**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** unknown

**Pest resistance:** sensitive to pests/diseases

## Use and Management

Its neat habit and compact growth make loquat an ideal specimen or patio shade tree, and it can be used as a residential street tree or median strip tree in areas where

overhead space is limited. But an adequate clear trunk needs to be developed early in the life of the tree to provide for vehicle clearance. Branches will have to be pruned to grow up, as they tend to droop with time under the weight of the developing branch. It is not suited for planting next to the street if trucks pass close to the tree since adequate clearance is not possible but is successful in wide median strips. It also blends well into informal shrubbery borders and the fruit is attractive to wildlife. It espaliers well against a sunny wall, and makes a good screen due to its dense canopy. Sprouts along the trunk can be a maintenance nuisance.

Providing best fruit and form when grown in full sun, loquat can tolerate partial shade and a variety of well-drained soils. It grows well on soils with a high pH and maintains the characteristic dark green foliage. Clay soil is acceptable as long as there is sufficient slope to allow surface water to run away from the root system. It often looks best in the southern portion of its range when given some shade in the afternoon, especially if it is not irrigated. Loquat should be well-watered until established, but can then survive periodic droughts. Do not overfertilize since this could increase sensitivity to fire blight disease. Loquat may live only 20- to 30-years so it should not be considered a permanent fixture in the landscape. It performs well along the coast with some protection from salty air. It is not for New Orleans area due to wet soils.

Although loquat can easily be grown from seed, many cultivars are available for consistent fruit quality. ‘Champagne’ (March–May), best for USDA hardiness zone 9, has yellow-skinned, white-fleshed, juicy, tart fruit, one of the better fruits. ‘Gold Nugget’ (May–June), best near coast, has larger, sweeter fruit with orange skin and flesh. ‘MacBeth’ (April–May) has exceptionally large fruit with yellow skin and creamy flesh. ‘Thales’ is a late yellow-fleshed variety. ‘Coppertone’, a hybrid, has dense growth with copper-colored new foliage and pale pink flowers. ‘Variegata’ has white variegated leaves.

Propagation is by seed, cuttings, or grafting of cultivars.

## Pests

Scales and caterpillars are occasional problems.

## Diseases

To reduce fireblight problems, provide good air circulation and keep away from other fireblight hosts, such as *Pyracantha*, pears, etc. If leaves and stems blacken from the top downward, prune back one-foot or more into healthy

wood. Sterilize shears with a mixture of one part bleach to nine parts water between cuts.

Root rot occurs on wet soils. Locate the tree in a well-drained soil.

## References

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