

# JUST FRUITS

## AND EXOTICS

# LOQUAT

## INTRODUCTION

Loquats are small evergreen trees with beautiful, coarsely textured leaves of deepest jade green. The small white flowers open between October and December – loquat flowers have an intense sweet scent. Winter brings abundant crops of delicious pale yellow fruit with an apricot flavor. Our loquat trees are cutting grown or grafted to insure fruiting in two years. Use fresh in fruit salad, freeze, use in pies or make jelly and jam. Loquats are one of the easiest, most problem-free fruits you can grow – a little care will go a long way with this tree. Loquats are self-pollinating.

## USES IN THE LANDSCAPE

Loquats grow to approximately 20 feet tall. With a small, rounded crown, the graceful, evergreen trees have a distinctly tropical air. Combine with ginger lilies, cycads or bananas to move your garden south. Use as a small specimen tree or mix in with citrus varieties for a tall evergreen hedge. Loquats look great near ponds or water features.

## PLANTING + CULTURE

### SITE SELECTION

Well-drained sandy soils are preferred, but loquats will grow on many soil types if good drainage is provided. Loquats do not tolerate flooding. Trees will grow more vigorously and produce more fruit in full sun.

## PLANTING + CULTURE

### SOIL PREPARATION AND PLANTING

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Loquats prefer slightly acid soil (pH 5.5-6.5), but soils of up to moderate alkalinity are readily tolerated. If you are in doubt about the acidity of your soil, take a soil sample to the Cooperative Extension Agent in your county for a soil test. Dig a planting hole approximately three times the width of the pot and at the same depth as the root ball. Set that soil aside and mix it 50/50 with either aged mushroom compost, aged manure or rotted pine bark & aged manure/compost. Remove the plant from the pot, gently loosen the root ball and place in the planting hole. To avoid burying too deep, make sure plant is positioned with the top most roots at the soil line. Fill the planting hole with the mix of soil and organic matter; gently tamp it in. Water thoroughly to settle the roots and eliminate air pockets. Do NOT put fertilizer in the planting hole. Only apply fertilizer if it is the correct time of year (see Fertilization section below). If desired, construct a water basin around the base of the tree approximately 36 inches in diameter. Mulch in spring and summer with approximately 4-6 inches of mulch. Pull mulch a couple of inches away from the trunk for good air circulation.

## PRUNING + CARE

Loquats require little pruning. Remove dead and damaged wood when appropriate.

Loquats are essentially free from pests and diseases. Freezes below 27°F may damage fruit and flowers, but will not harm the trees.

## FERTILIZATION

The type of fertilizer you choose may be chemical or organic. Make sure that the fertilizer contains iron, zinc, manganese, magnesium, molybdenum, copper and boron. These minor elements are very important to plants and most soils are low in these elements. Application rates vary according to age of plant. See chart below:

Starter Fertilizer & Soil (Apply at Planting)	Fertilizer to Maintain (Apply Early March, Late May, & Late July)
Espoma Bio-tone® Starter Plus Mix Mushroom Compost in Soil	Espoma Tree-tone®

Notes:

- Follow Instructions on Bag for how much to apply each time.
- Months to Fertilize vary based on your zone. Fertilize 3 times per year. We recommend the 1<sup>st</sup> fertilization starting after the last Freeze of the winter (Late February/Early March in zone 8) & the last Fertilization being no later than August or even June/July in some of the colder zones 7 & below.)
- Fertilizing too late in the year in colder climates will promote new growth, which will be subject to freeze damage.

See our “Planting a Tree Correctly” Guide & Espoma Bio-tone® and Tree-tone® Fact Sheets on our website for more info.

## WATER

The first year is a critical time for the establishment of a new loquat. Water thoroughly twice a week on light soils and once a week on clay soils. Soak the entire root system deeply – this usually takes 40-50 minutes. Loquats should receive at least 1 inch of water each week for best growth and fruit production. Water regularly, especially during dry periods. Fruit may drop prematurely if insufficiently irrigated during dry spells.

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## VARIETIES

### CHRISTMAS

This variety ripens very early in the season, escaping most of the hard January and February freezes. Fruit is huge, up to 1 1/2 inches in diameter. Bright yellow with a tangy apricot flavor.