



Loquat Fruit-*Eriobotrya Japonica*

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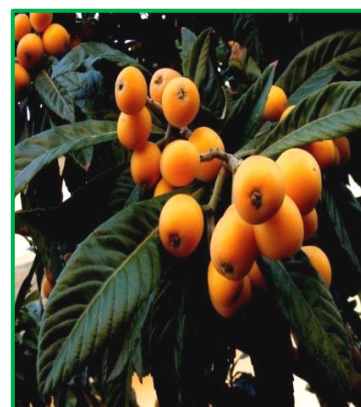
Loquat (*Eriobotrya japonica* Lindl.) is an evergreen fruit tree native to south China. It has a rich history of cultivation in China for over 2000 years and is now grown in more than 30 countries worldwide such as Japan, Taiwan, and Korea. It belongs to the Rosaceae family and the *Eriobotrya* genus. In India, it is commonly referred to as the "Japanese medlar" and is commercially grown in various states such as Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Delhi, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, and Maharashtra. In India, the Loquat fruit is locally known as Lukat or Lugath. China holds the title of the largest producer, with a significant area dedicated to its cultivation.

- ❖ The blooming of loquat occurs during autumn and early winter, while its fruit ripens in early summer, providing a delightful option when other fruits are out of season.
- ❖ Consumers are drawn to the loquat fruit due to its appealing appearance, juicy flavor, and abundant nutrients.
- ❖ Notably, it serves as a valuable source of soluble fiber, vitamins, carotenoids, antioxidants, and essential minerals like calcium, potassium, phosphorus, and magnesium, which are vital for the human body.
- ❖ Furthermore, the loquat has a long history of medicinal use, as documented in the "Compendium of Material Medica."
- ❖ It possesses various therapeutic properties, including regulating blood pressure, stimulating the circulatory system, reducing the risk of cancer, treating inflammation, preventing diabetes, soothing the respiratory system, enhancing the immune system, aiding digestion, promoting skin health, improving eye vision, and combating viruses. Consequently, the loquat is widely regarded as a healthful fruit.
- ❖ Overall, the loquat is a versatile and attractive plant that can be enjoyed for its foliage, flowers, and fruit. Its ease of cultivation and adaptability to various climates make it a popular choice for home gardens and landscapes.

Loquat Tree Description

The tree can grow 20-30 feet height, but is usually much smaller than this (about 10 feet). Loquats are easy to grow and are often used as an ornamental. Their boldly textured foliage adds a tropical look to the garden and contrast well with many other plants. Because of the shallow root system of the loquat, care should be taken in mechanical cultivation not to damage the roots.

- ❖ **Loquat leaves** are generally elliptical- lineolate, 5 to 12 inches long and 3 to 4 inches wide. They are dark green and glossy on the upper surface, whitish or rusty-hairy beneath,



thick and stiff, with conspicuous parallel, oblique veins. The new growth is sometimes tinged with red. The leaves are narrow in some cultivars and broad in others.

- ❖ Small, white, sweetly fragrant **flowers** are borne in fall or early winter in panicles at the ends of the branches. Before they open, the flower clusters have an unusual rusty-woolly texture.
- ❖ **Loquat fruits**, growing in clusters, are oval, rounded or pear-shaped, 1 to 2 inches long with a smooth or downy, yellow or orange, sometimes red-blushed skin. The succulent, tangy flesh is white, yellow or orange and sweet to sub acid or acid, depending on the cultivar.
- ❖ Each fruit contains three to five large brown **seeds**.



The loquat is normally pollinated by bees. Some cultivars are self-infertile and others are only partially self-fertile. Flowers of the early and late flushes tend to have abnormal stamens and very little viable pollen. Thinning of flowers and young fruits in the cluster, or clipping off all or part of flower and fruit clusters is sometimes done to enhance fruit size. Under moist conditions the loquat tends to develop an alternate-bearing pattern, which can be modified somewhat by cluster thinning in heavy production years. For the highest quality fruit the clusters are sometimes bagged to protect from sunburn and eliminate bird damage.

Varieties of Loquat Fruits

There are so many varieties with different harvesting times are available. However, the following are the prime cultivars.

- ❖ **Early Varieties**
- ❖ **Mid-Season Varieties**
- ❖ **Late-Season Varieties**

These are just a few examples of the many varieties of loquat fruit available, each with its own unique characteristics and flavours.

- ❖ **Golden Yellow**: This variety has a golden yellow color and is an early variety of loquat fruit.
- ❖ **Thames Pride**: Another early variety, Thames Pride has large round fruits with a pale yellow color.
- ❖ **Large Agra**: This mid-season variety has large fruits and is popular for its taste.
- ❖ **Mammoth**: Also a mid-season variety, Mammoth has large fruits and is known for its juicy flesh.
- ❖ **Tanaka**: This late-season variety is known for its sweet and flavourful fruits.
- ❖ **California Advance**: Another late-season variety, California Advance is popular for its late harvesting time.

Uses and Health Benefits of Loquat Fruits

In modern times, loquat fruit is still used in traditional medicine for its potential health benefits. It is also used in the production of juices, syrups, and alcoholic beverages. Loquat leaves are often used to make herbal teas and supplements, as they are believed to have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.

In addition, loquat fruit is also popular as a healthy snack and is used in culinary dishes such as salads, salsas, and chutneys. It is also used as a natural sweetener in smoothies and baked goods.

Furthermore, the seeds of the loquat fruit are sometimes used to produce oil, which is used in the cosmetic industry for its moisturizing and nourishing properties.

Overall, the modern use of loquat extends beyond traditional medicine and culinary applications, with the fruit and its derivatives being utilized in various industries for their potential health and cosmetic benefits.

Health Benefits

The following are the health benefits of Loquat fruit:-

- ❖ Loquat fruit is rich in antioxidants, which can help protect the body from oxidative stress and reduce the risk of chronic diseases.
- ❖ Loquat fruit is high in fiber, which can aid in digestion and prevent constipation.
- ❖ Loquat fruit contains vitamins A and C, which are important for immune function and can help protect against infections.
- ❖ Loquat fruit is low in calories and can be a healthy snack option for those looking to manage their weight.
- ❖ Loquat leaves have been used in traditional medicine to treat coughs, inflammation, and other respiratory conditions.
- ❖ Loquat fruit contains compounds such as triterpenes and phenolic acids, which have been studied for their potential anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer properties. These compounds may also help lower cholesterol levels and improve heart health.
- ❖ Herbal teas and supplements made from loquat leaves are often used to support overall health and wellness.
- ❖ In addition to its nutritional and medicinal benefits, the loquat tree is also valued for its ornamental beauty, with its glossy, dark green leaves and fragrant white flowers adding aesthetic appeal to gardens and landscapes.

Caution for Loquat Fruit

- ❖ Additionally, some people may be allergic to loquat fruit, so it is important to be aware of any potential allergies before consuming it. As with any new food, it is recommended to start with a small amount to see how your body reacts.
- ❖ Furthermore, while loquat fruit is low in calories, it is still important to consume it in moderation as part of a balanced diet. Eating too much of any one food can lead to an imbalance in nutrients and potentially contribute to weight gain.
- ❖ Lastly, if you have any underlying health conditions or concerns, it is always best to consult with a healthcare professional before making significant changes to your diet, including adding new foods like loquat fruit.

The global demand for loquat fruit continues to grow, driven by its nutritional value, health benefits, and culinary versatility. As consumer awareness of the fruit's attributes increases, the market for loquat products is expected to expand further. With its rich history, cultural significance, and diverse uses, the loquat tree holds a special place in horticulture, agriculture, and traditional medicine around the world.