

Eriobotrya japonica 'Variegata' 'Variegata' Loquat¹

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INTRODUCTION

The dense, rounded 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 (Fig. 1). Fruit rarely sets further north. Loquat is a rapidly-growing evergreen tree and can reach 25 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 10 to 12-inch-long variegated 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* 'Variegata'

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

Common name(s): 'Variegata' Loquat

Family: *Rosaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 8 through 11 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; espalier; fruit tree; hedge; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; screen; trainable as a standard; specimen; residential street tree; tree has been successfully grown in urban areas where air pollution, poor drainage, compacted soil, and/or drought are common

Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

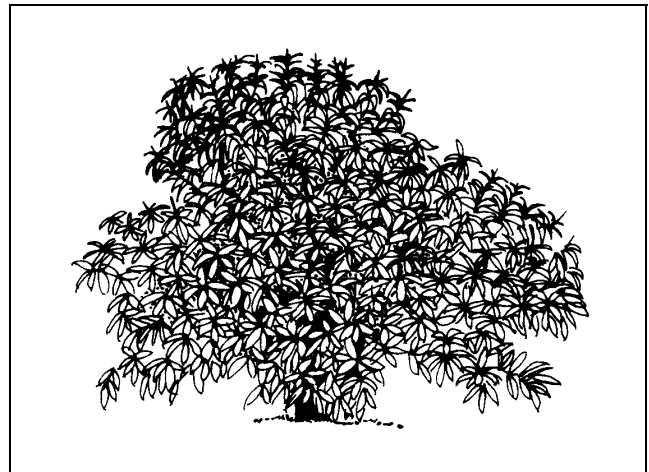


Figure 1. Middle-aged 'Variegata' Loquat.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 20 to 30 feet

Spread: 30 to 35 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

Crown shape: round

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: medium

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: pectinate; serrate

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval); oblong

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen;
evergreen

Leaf blade length: 8 to 12 inches

Leaf color: variegated

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: fall flowering; pleasant
fragrance; showy; winter flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval; round

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: orange; yellow

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; attracts squirrels
and other mammals; suited for human consumption;
fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily
damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree
grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or
pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; not
particularly showy; should be grown with a single
leader; no thorns

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop
strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: gray

Current year twig thickness: thick

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun;
tree grows in full sun

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

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerance: moderate

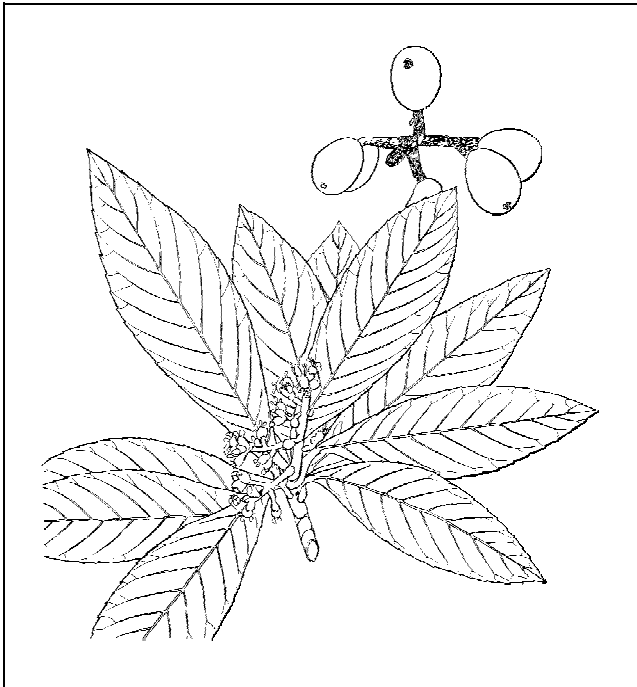


Figure 3. Foliage of 'Variegata' Loquat.

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: No entries found.

Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect tree health or aesthetics

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 in the southern portion of its range, 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. 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.

Propagation is by 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.