



One of the easiest to grow, and hardiest of all subtropical trees is the loquat. It is also one of the most reliable, and heaviest producers of fruit. The loquat may start blooming as early as fall, and continues through winter. Usually, flowers will not get damaged with occasional frosts. The apricot-like juicy loquats will follow in abundance during March-April and will bring you joy as the earliest fruit of the season. Yet, after eating a few handfuls of fresh deliciousness, a question arises: now what should I do with all that fruit!/? Here is a great suggestion: Why not make a jar of a homemade jam? It makes an excellent gift that will serve to win over and influence your friends and neighbors. Also, if you tire of all the fruit that your trees are producing, preserving it is an excellent alternative to simply leaving it all on the tree, or letting it drop and rot in your compost heap.

### Loquat Compote Recipe

This recipe does not take much of actual preparation time (total of about 25 min for pre-cleaned fruit), however, the whole process of cooking takes four days. It preserves natural flavor and does not require extra water. This is unlike other recipes where water is added and the mixture is boiled for a long time.

**Day 1.** Gather the loquats when they are at their full size and ripe. Wash and remove the seeds and blossom ends. Save the seeds, you will need them for Loquat Nut Liqueur (see below). Place fruit in a large pot, but do not use aluminum! The dish must be enameled, copper, or a stainless steel stockpot. Even better would be a "jam pan". They are wide and shallow, making it easy to

Scientific name: *Eriobotrya japonica*  
Family: Rosaceae. Apple, Cherry, Almond, and Peach belong to this family.  
Origin: China  
Common names: Loquat, Japanese Plum



stir the fruit. Add enough sugar to lightly coat every fruit, then mix well. You may use up to equal amounts of sugar to fruit, depending on fruit sweetness and your taste: if you do not desire it too sweet, you can use as little sugar as is needed to kill the acidic taste. Cover the pot and let it sit overnight. This will allow the sugar-covered fruit to produce juice.

**Day 2.** Place the pot over high heat and bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. More sugar may be added to taste. Boil for one to two minutes. Remove from heat and let it sit overnight. Repeat the same process for Day 3.

**Day 4.** Place the pot over high heat and bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Boil for 10-15 minutes, or until fruit is soft and starts to break easily. While the jam is still boiling hot, carefully pour it

Top: Loquat fruit.  
Bottom: Fruiting loquat.





into hot, sterilized jars all the way to the top, then seal with sterilized lids. Turn the sealed jars upside down and let sit until cool. Then, turn them back, lids up. Preserved this way, the jam can be kept for years. If the jam will be used right away, there is no need for sterilization, just wait until it cools and enjoy.

**Extras:** A spoon of rum can be added for a spicy, exotic flavor at the end of cooking.

Adding herbs is a nice touch as well, but some herbs will only become more potent when cooked. Warm herbs are great. Cinnamon is a pleasant addition. Beware of rosemary, you will want to avoid using the whole branch, and make sure to only use if it is fresh and green. Honey and Stevia are also good alternatives to your sugar addition.

**Jar and sterilization:** Self-sealing glass jars are available at any arts and crafts store, however, instead of buying new jar, why not start saving pickle jars? They are inexpensive and will work well. Plus, you get to eat the pickles! The jars can be sterilized in a hot oven for ten-fifteen minutes; the metal lids can be boiled in water. The boiling jam, as well as the jars during the sterilizing process, are both very hot, and may cause serious injuries if they come in contact with skin. Be very careful, and use gloves.

### Seeds.

It is believed that Loquat seeds are poisonous if eaten fresh, as they contain small amount cyanide, like some other fruit seeds from the Rosaceae family— cherry, etc. How-

ever, this statement is still up for debate. The seeds, when used properly, give a great "cherry" flavor. They have an aroma reminiscent of bitter almond, which belongs to the same family. Toss a few whole loquats with seeds inside a chicken before roasting it. After cooking, they will taste so cherry-like, you will not believe the change! Years ago, people would cook loquats, dye them red, and make "cherry" pies with them. They also ate the seeds roasted.

### Italian Loquat Nut Liqueur.

Soak loquat seeds, preferably dried, in vodka with sugar or syrup for three to four months, shaking occasionally to



make a nice cherry-flavored liqueur. A piece of lemon and small vanilla bean will add a more exotic flavor. Consider aging for closer to six months to be reminiscent of Amaretto.

### Japanese Biwashu Liqueur.

Same as above, except the whole fruit with seeds are used. Age it in a dark place for six months or more for best taste.●

### UNDEMANDING AND FRUITFUL: GROWING LOQUAT IN POT

Loquat is pretty hardy tree and can be grown even in mild temperate climates, surviving temperatures as low as 15°F (Zone 7b to 8). However, if you live in colder climate, this fascinating tree can be grown in a pot and brought indoors during winter months. Loquat leaves can take some frost without significant damage. It is recommended though to bring the plant inside once temperatures drop below freezing for a long period of time. Loquat is very early bloomer, probably one of the earliest of all subtropical varieties. Flowering season occurs in late winter - early spring, although some trees may sporadically bloom starting late fall. If kept in warm conditions, your potted tree may start early flowering without being cold damaged. Keep the plant in well-lit spot, which can be either warm (inside the house) or cool (garage). When overwintering in a cool room, reduce watering to once a week or less, just to make sure the roots do not overdry; the plant will stop growing and go into dormancy, but usually stays evergreen. Once the chances of freeze are gone, take the tree outside, to provide more sunlight to encourage flowering. In natural conditions,

Loquat is a rather big tree. However, growth rate is moderate, and being undemanding about water, the plant can grow and fruit in a relatively small container without any problem. When the tree overgrows its 15 gal container and if a root bound occurs, take the root ball out of the pot, trim the roots up to ¼ of length and plant the tree back in the same container, adding fresh soil. Water well and leave alone until the soil gets slightly dry; this will encourage new root growth without water damage. Then, resume regular watering. Grown from seed, the trees will flower within four years. Grafted plants start flowering earlier. Apply fertilizer, rich with phosphorous and potassium, in October-November to induce flowering. Loquats are heavy produces, and if you did everything right, the tree may bend under the weight of its own fruit. Branches are somewhat fragile, so make sure to provide necessary supports. Unlike most of popular tropical fruit trees (Mango or Avocado), the Loquat will not fruit itself to death even when production is heavy on a small tree. This is a tough plant, enjoyable for both experienced growers and beginners. It will not let you down!●



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