Loquat Care
March 8, 2008

**Question:** We were given three young loquat trees. Can you tell me how to care for them and when to expect them to bear fruit?

- Anna T., Punta Gorda

**Answer:** This is a tree that can be grown for its good look as well as its delicious fruits. Growth rate is medium and the tree usually does not exceed 22 feet in height and 25 feet in breadth. Thus, the loquat, *Eriobotrya japonica,* is a tree for even small gardens. It is extremely low maintenance. Most trees need no fertilization. If the tree is growing in a fertilized lawn, there is absolutely no need to apply addition fertilizer to the tree. The loquat is highly drought tolerant but produces more abundantly when irrigated two or three times a month during the dry season. When grown from seedlings, most trees will produce a decent harvest during their fifth year. However, because trees flower and set fruit in the winter, freezing temperature could reduce yield. Nevertheless, in Southwest Florida, temperatures do not get cold enough to affect leaves or stems. Pruning is rarely needed and is certainly not required for fruiting. Mature trees are currently fruiting and this year’s crop is a bumper crop. A single tree usually produces sufficient fruits for the average household. Typical yield is between 50 and 150 pounds per tree. The fruits can be eaten out of hand. However, I've found that the sweetest fruits are those that are allowed to fully develop on the tree and are slightly withered. However, these older fruits are often laden with Caribbean fruit fly grubs. A loquat tree grows only a few feet from the Extension building. There will be tasty fresh snacks for a couple more weeks to come.

Stephen Brown is a horticulture agent with the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the horticulture desk at 533-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. or by e-mailing brownsh@leegov.com. Visit his web page at [http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/hort/GardenHome.shtml](http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/hort/GardenHome.shtml) “Garden Doctor” video clips [http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/Video.shtml](http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/Video.shtml) and flowering trees information at [http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/GardenPubsA_Z.shtml](http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/GardenPubsA_Z.shtml)