



Eriobotrya deflexa Bronze Loquat¹

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INTRODUCTION

This rounded, spreading, evergreen, small tree reaches a height of 15 to 20 feet with a 10 to 15-foot spread in a sunny spot (Fig. 1). Taller trees can be found in partially shaded sites where the tree reaches skyward for light. The large, eight-inch-long leaves are a bright red-bronze or coppery color when young and maintain this color for a considerable period of time but eventually turn dark green. The small white, fragrant flowers are produced on terminal panicles in spring and are followed by small, inedible fruits. Bronze Loquat can be espaliered, grown in patio containers, or used as a specimen. Although shrubby with a tight, compact, dense crown, it can easily be trained into a small tree form and used for a small shade tree near a deck or patio.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Eriobotrya deflexa*

Pronunciation: air-ee-oh-BOT-rec-uh
dee-FLECK-suh

Common name(s): Bronze Loquat

Family: *Rosaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; espalier; hedge; wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); 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; narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance

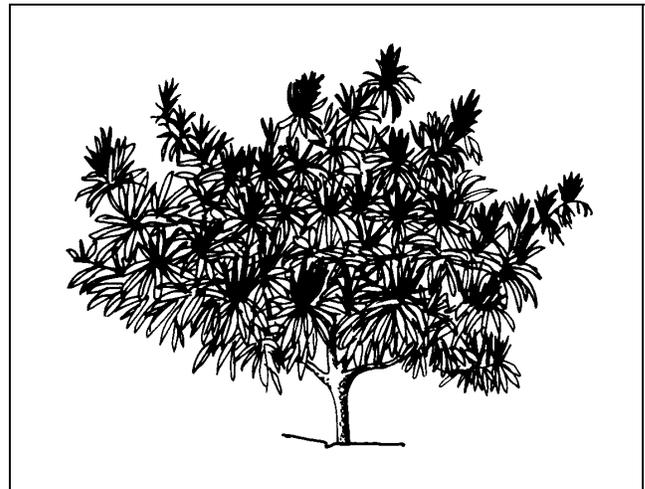


Figure 1. Young Bronze Loquat.

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

DESCRIPTION

Height: 15 to 20 feet

Spread: 10 to 20 feet

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

Crown shape: round; vase shape

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: medium

Texture: coarse

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: dentate; serrate

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval); oblong

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen; evergreen

Leaf blade length: 8 to 12 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: pleasant fragrance; showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval; round

Fruit length: < .5 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: orange; yellow

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; attracts squirrels and other mammals; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

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: green

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



Figure 3. Foliage of Bronze Loquat.

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

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 it is successful in wide median strips. It also blends well into informal shrubby 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, 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.

The cultivar 'Bronze Improved' has bronze-colored new growth and grows 20 feet tall with a 15-foot spread.

Propagation is by seed.

Diseases and insects

This tree is usually pest-free

Two common problems are fireblight and root rot on wet soils. 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 between cuts.