

Eriobotrya Growing Guide

Eriobotrya Growing Information

Commonly known as 'Loquats'

These evergreen trees or large shrubs are growing in popularity partly because of their attractive foliage but also because of their ability to produce edible fruits in hot summers which climate change may mean are on the increase.

Loquats originate from China and Japan but are commonly grown in Mediterranean countries for their fruit.

They have broad upright lance shaped and toothed leathery leaves. Terminal panicles of white hawthorn scented flowers appear usually in the early autumn followed by rounded orange-yellow fruits 1.5in across in the following spring. At Burncoose we have found the fruit to ripen only after very warm summers and to be edible only when the flowers appear much later in the year.

E. japonica is best grown in full sun against a warm wall to have any chance of the fruits ripening. Those forms with narrower leaves seem to have the best chance of fruiting. At a prep school in Northamptonshire I observed an elderly plant which fruited every year. It is therefore reasonable to argue that this plant is perfectly hardy in southern counties if grown in the right place.

If you grow *E. japonica* in the greenhouse you will need plenty of room. It is unlikely to flower if grown in a pot and needs an open bed with plenty of pruning to keep it in shape.

In more recent years we have been impressed by small trees of *Eriobotrya deflexa* growing at Caerhays. Two of these freestanding trees have now grown to 20ft. Their key attribute is beautiful reddish new

growth. In a normal year there are two sets of new growth to enjoy. As yet these trees have produced no flowers but the foliage effect is outstanding. We intend to offer this new plant shortly on our website.

Loquats are readily grown from semi ripe cuttings taken in mid summer and provided with bottom head. We have grown them from seed which proved much easier than we expected and some of the young plants are romping away in the garden.



Eriobotrya deflexa



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Eriobotrya japonica



Eriobotrya japonica



Eriobotrya japonica

This was first discovered in the US in 1970 as a chance seedling from *Eriobotrya deflexa* which had been growing in the vicinity of *Rhaphiolepis indica* and/or *Rhaphiolepis x delacourii*.

It is a handsome evergreen shrub, slow growing and with a dense rounded habit. Since both its parents are evergreen this follows but its habit is much more that of a *Rhaphiolepis* shrub rather than *Eriobotrya deflexa* which is, with us, now a small tree of 25ft+ in height with a 15ft spread. It is said that x *Rhaphiobotrya* 'Coppertone' will eventually grow to around 15ft tall in maturity.

The leaf form also takes more from *Rhaphiolepis* than *Eriobotrya* although the latter is clearly evident in its glossy new leaves which emerge first as coppery red with the rusty coloured hairs of *deflexa* from spring into summer. The leaves mature to a glabrous glossy green; paler underneath and can be up to 6-8in long.

Our original plant has been growing happily outside in a glade with dappled shade as you can see from these photographs. We have had flowers every year since it was a pot grown plant in the nursery and the photographs also show plants in flower in the nursery at Burncoose. The flowers are pale pink and highly scented. They appear in terminal panicles in April or May and, with us, sometimes well on into June. Not all the flower clusters actually come out at the same time.

No fruit has yet to be observed on this plant. It seems entirely hardy with us although the new growth has had minor scorching from east winds on one occasion.

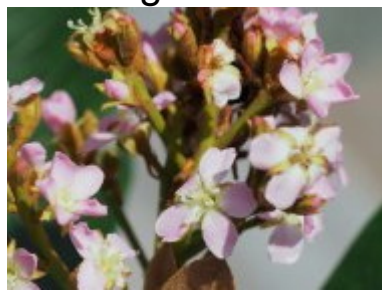
A plant which will very probably become more popular and widely grown in time when people see it in flower. As a naturally occurring bi or intergeneric hybrid we think it takes quite some beating.



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'Coppertone'



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