

Why aren't loquat and orange trees producing?

Q I planted a 1- or 2-year-old loquat tree in my backyard over three years ago. Though the tree itself is now over 6 feet tall and wide and appears otherwise healthy, I have yet to see one bloom or fruit. I fertilize three

times per year with fruiting tree spikes according to directions, and it gets plenty of water and sunshine. It grows a plethora of leaves, so what am I doing wrong? I live in Hemet.

A Since you didn't mention a variety name, I am going to assume that you have a seedling tree.

Almost all fruit trees sold in garden centers and nurseries are grafted, meaning that a scion (either a bud or small cutting) is grafted onto a hardy rootstock. The resulting "Franken-tree" is more tolerant of adverse soil conditions such as fungal disease and nematodes. Grafting also causes some dwarfing, so your tree will only reach 12 or 15 feet in height instead of 30.

An additional benefit of growing a grafted tree instead of a seedling tree is earlier fruiting. When a tree is grafted, the scion

wood is generally from an older tree — one that is already producing fruit. This tricks the tree into thinking that it's old enough to start flowering and fruiting.

In comparison, seedling trees will not flower and bear fruit until they are about 10 years old.

If you have enough patience, you could keep your current tree and wait until you eventually get fruit. Otherwise, I would seek out a grafted named variety such as Champagne, Big Jim or Gold Nugget. Gold Nugget is self-fertile, but most varieties need a "friend" for pollination.

For more information, go to crfg.org/pubs/ff/loquat.html.

Q I planted a dwarf navel orange tree about 2½ years ago. I flowered a little last year, and lots of flowers this year, but that was all. It is fed with Citrus Growers as well as Dr. Earth Fruit Tree Fertilizer. What can I do to get oranges, please? I am in Upland.

A Usually, when you plant any kind of (grafted) fruit tree, you won't see much fruit until the third year after it has been planted. I would only add that mulching and regular watering will make your tree especially happy.

It sounds like you're doing everything right. Keep doing that and you should get oranges next year.

Q I had this plant start growing in my garden and at first I thought it was a bush, but it has kept growing and is now taller than my willow that was planted as a tree at the same time. I have not seen any berries or flowers. The bark is dark brown and rough.

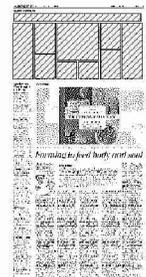
A Your photo shows a healthy-looking tree with lance-shaped leaves. If you crush the leaves and they smell like a cough drop, it is likely a camphor tree.

We have had these trees appear at random in the mulched areas of our gardens. They are quite attractive, but they have an invasive root system and can produce a lot of leaf litter.

Have questions? Email gardening@scng.com. For more master gardening resources, go to ucanr.edu/sites/RiversideMG for Riverside County; mgsb.ucanr.edu for San Bernardino County; celosangeles.ucanr.edu/UC_Master_Gardener_Program for Los Angeles County; and mgorange.ucanr.edu for Orange County.



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When it comes to loquats, grafted trees bear fruit earlier than seedling trees. When a tree is grafted, the scion wood is generally from an older tree – one that is already producing fruit. This tricks the tree into thinking that it's old enough to start flowering and fruiting.