

1. INTRODUCTION

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The loquat (Eriobotrya japonica, Lindl), Botanically belongs to the order Rosales and the family Rosaceae. It is a small evergreen tree, which has been in cultivation for a long time in Asia and is native to China. It is cultivated in the mild regions around the Mediterranean, successfully grown in many parts of India and considered as important fruit in Japan, where it has been long grown.

In Egypt, loquat is still unknown by many consumers outside big cities and grown in small coastal areas. Parent trees are originated from imported material from Lebanon and mostly arisen from seeds.

Loquat is one of the desirable trees for ornament though it is mainly known in private gardens. Although it is commonly eaten as fresh fruits, the loquat can be utilized in several ways. For culinary purposes, it may be stewed and served as sauce, or it may be made into excellent jelly and jam or used in making pie. In addition, the fruits ripen in late March and early April, when no fruits other than citrus are in the local markets.

Loquat trees grown in Egypt are not known to be of established varieties. Great variations exist between

trees known to be introduced from abroad. Most of these trees were propagated by seeds. Therefore, this investigation was carried out to throw some light not only on the performance, productivity and fruit characteristics of both seedling and grafted trees, but also to evaluate these two groups of trees through studying tree growth, flowering, pollen fertility, fruiting and fruit quality.