Lychees

Lychees are one of the most renowned fruits of the world. Today they are grown on every continent except Antarctica and they are famed as the "King of Fruits." They can best be described as having the flavor of passionfruit and grapes with the scent of a red rose. These fruit are highly addictive.

Care of Lychee Trees

**Planting:** Keep in pot until late March or early April, and bring in if there is going to be a frost or freeze. Then the tree can be planted in the ground in a sunny location. While in the container, water every day, and once in the ground water every day until the root system is well established.

To grow a healthy lychee tree, start by planting it in a good location. Lychee trees need full sun so you should plant them away from other large trees and you should plant the trees at least 10 feet away from buildings. Shaded areas of the lychee canopy will generally not produce fruit so if you are planting the tree for its future fruit production you should pay attention to your tree's level of sun exposure. Plant directly in the ground (not raised bed) in existing soil.

The new growth of lychee tree(s) is very delicate and easily damaged by the wind. Wind damage can severely impair the development of a small lychee tree and destroy new growth before it has a chance to develop and mature. Plant your tree in an area that receives some measure of wind protection.

**Container plants:** If you are going to keep the plant in a container, move it us to at least a 7 gallon container in late spring and then to a 15 gallon the next spring. Remember container plants will need more water than plants in the ground. Fertilize infrequently and lightly with an organic fertilizer. You will need to add Mycorrhizal Fungi as a soil treatment that will increase the roots ability to absorb and distribute nutrients and water and inoculate the tree against many plant diseases and pathogens. Take the tree out of the container yearly and trim the roots so the plant will not get root bound.

**Fertilization:** Use only a balanced organic fertilizer (very important), and fertilize lightly in spring and summer. If you want to speed the growth of the tree, fertilize more often. Do not plant other plants
underneath lychee for the root system is very close to the surface and could be damaged. Conversely, mulch under the tree with a good native mulch or leaf mold.

**Pruning:** Prune back about 6” after fruit harvest to promote more fruit the following season.

**Harvesting:** The fruit grow in clusters on a branch. Cut the entire cluster when harvesting. This will also promote new growth and fruiting for the next year.

**Cold Hardiness:** The adult plant is cold hardy to 25 degrees. It is important to protect the plant

**Varieties of Lychees for the Houston Area Climate**

**Brewster** fruit is red, medium or large, sweet and juicy. At peak ripeness the Brewster is truly delicious and in taste tests against other varieties consistently outranks all of the others. The tree is a vigorous grower with a hemispherical shape and upright, spreading habit of growth and wide crotch angles. The branches are strong and grooved or ribbed.

**Mauritius** is the variety of choice for commercial growers in Florida because it is a regular and heavy producer. The fruit is sweet and pink to red. The flavor of Mauritius fruit is distinctly different and spicier than the Brewster and is quite delicious.

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