



Our Neighborhood Fruit Trees: How to Share the Bounty

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The Palisadian-Post has partnered with locally founded environmental organization Resilient Palisades to deliver a “green tip” to our readers in each newspaper. This edition’s tip was written by Sonja Alper and Lisa Boyle of The Zero Waste Team.

Beautiful big trees with clusters of yellow round fruit seem to be everywhere in the Palisades right now, especially this year. They are loquat trees, native to Asia, where they also grow in the wild.

Loquats (*Eriobotrya japonica*) are very high in vitamin A and beta carotene, an antioxidant, and have been used in Chinese medicine to treat various diseases for thousands of years. See WebMD for a full listing of the nutrients and benefits of the loquat fruit.

But the best thing about these health bombs is they are juicy and super delicious. Fully ripe loquats (yellow-orange and soft to the touch) taste sweet, yet slightly tart, with floral and citrus notes. That makes them very versatile for different kinds of recipes like jams, pies, chutneys, salad toppings and smoothies. And they are a great addition to cheese platters.

Unfortunately most of the fruit goes seemingly unnoticed by property owners and falls down to rot, only to be enjoyed by birds and other critters. Trees can grow very high, which makes it challenging to pick the clusters, but gardeners can help.

Food waste is a big problem in our country. Up to 40% of our food supply goes uneaten, while at least one in nine people don’t have steady access to enough food, especially healthy food. That’s where Palisadians can help with our backyard fruit, including the abundant loquats.

We spoke with Nkemdilim Nwosu, director of communications at Food Forward, an organization that fights hunger and prevents food waste by rescuing fresh surplus produce, connecting this abundance with people experiencing food insecurity and inspiring others to do the same.

“In 2009, while on one of many slow walks with his aging dog, Rick Nahmias noticed how much fruit in his neighborhood ended up on the ground, left to rot,” Nwosu shared. “When the Great Recession hit, the loss of jobs and homes led to an increase in demand at food pantries. In witnessing this, Rick saw a connection between uneaten citrus on neighbor’s trees and a need for access to healthy produce in nearby communities.”



This prompted a post on Craigslist, seeking volunteers to harvest tangerines from backyard trees.

“The event ultimately resulted in the donation of 85 pounds of surplus fruits to a local food pantry,” Nwosu continued. “Since that first pick, Food Forward has expanded exponentially into three award-winning food recovery programs: Wholesale Recovery, Farmers Market Recovery and Backyard Harvest; rescuing and distributing enough produce to feed 250,000 individuals their five daily servings of fruits and vegetables daily.

“Our programs are essential to building healthier communities and mitigating food waste, and delivers on our motto of ‘Sharing the Abundance.’”

1. Our hundreds of hunger relief agency partners serve communities in need, getting them the free fresh produce.
2. Our environment becomes cleaner due to less food waste.
3. Produce donors receive a donation receipt for their contribution.

“Our unique plant-based approach results in greater health equity in the communities we serve,” Nwosu concluded. “Moreover, our food recovery operation participated in a sustainability study where we learned that Food Forward’s food recovery work prevented 215 times more greenhouse gases than its operations emit.”

To share your backyard fruit, visit [foodforward.org](https://www.foodforward.org)