

FGCU Food Forest

Plant Database

Longan (*Dimocarpus longan*)

Quick Facts

Origin: Southern China

Description: Large tree, to 50 feet tall, with a dense, symmetrical crown and rough bark. Fruits round, 0.5-1 inch in diameter, with a rough, light brown peel and a sweet, translucent, whitish pulp surrounding a smooth black seed.

Uses: Food, soap, and medicinal.

Harvest: Early to mid-August in China. August and September in Florida.

Flower: Pale-yellow, 5- to 6-petaled, hairy-stalked flowers are borne in upright terminal panicles, male and female mingled.

Tolerance: The longan thrives best on a rich sandy loam and nearly as well on moderately acid, somewhat organic, sand. Small trees suffer leaf- and twig-damage if the temperature falls to 31° or 30° F and are killed at just a few degrees lower. Larger trees show leaf injury at 27° to 28° F, small branch injury at 25° to 26° F, and large branch and trunk symptoms at 24° F (-4.44° C).



General Description: The longan is a large tree, to 50 feet (15 m) tall, with a dense, symmetrical crown and rough bark. It has alternate, compound leaves to 12 inches (30 cm) in length, with 6-9 pairs of leaflets. They are leathery, wavy, glossy-green on the upper surface, minutely hairy and grayish-green beneath. The flowers staminate,

pistillate and hermaphroditic, small, whitish, produced in terminal or axillary panicles.

Longan Fruits are round, 0.5-1 inch (1-2.5 cm) in diameter, with a rough, light brown peel and a sweet, translucent, whitish pulp surrounding a smooth black seed.

- **Native Origin:** The longan is native to southern China, in the provinces of Kwangtung, Kwangsi, Schezwan and Fukien, between elevations of 500 and 1,500 ft (150-450 m).
- **General History:** It has been said that the longan was introduced into India in 1798 but, in Indian literature, it is averred that the longan is native not only to China but also to southwestern India and the forests of upper Assam and the Garo hills, and is cultivated in Bengal and elsewhere as an ornamental and shade tree. The longan was introduced into Florida from southern China by the United States Department of Agriculture in 1903 and has flourished in a few locations but never became popular. There was a young tree growing at the Agricultural Station in Bermuda in 1913. A tree planted at the Federal Experiment Station in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, was 10 ft (3 m) high in 1926, 23 ft (7 m) in 1929. A longan tree flourished in the Atkins Garden in Cuba and seedlings were distributed but found to fruit irregularly and came to be valued mostly for their shade and ornamental quality. In Hawaii, the longan was found to grow faster and more vigorously than the lychee but the fruit is regarded there as less flavorful than the lychee.
- **Distribution:** The longan is cultivated throughout the tropics and subtropics, but primarily in Thailand, China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Australia, and in the USA, Florida and Hawaii. The tree grows but does not fruit in Malaya and the Philippines. There are many of the trees in Reúñion and Mauritius. The longan is adaptable to different soils, but doesn't tolerate waterlogging or saline conditions. Growth is best in fertile, deep soils with a pH of 5.5 to 6.
- **Season of Harvest:** A serious problem with the longan is its irregular bearing—often one good year followed by 1 or 2 poor years. Another handicap is the ripening season—early to mid-August in China, which is the time of typhoons; August and September in Florida which is during the hurricane season. Rain is a major nuisance in harvesting and in conveying the fruit to market or to drying sheds or processing plants.
- **Uses:** Longans are much eaten fresh, out-of-hand, but some have maintained that the fruit is improved by cooking. In China, the majority are canned in syrup or dried. The canned fruits were regularly shipped from Shanghai to the United States in the past. Today, they are exported from Hong Kong and Taiwan. A liqueur is made by macerating the longan flesh in alcohol. The seeds, because of their saponin content, are used like soapberries (*Sapindus saponaria* L.) for shampooing the hair. The flesh of the fruit is administered as a stomachic, febrifuge and vermifuge, and is regarded as an antidote for poison. A decoction of the dried flesh is taken as a tonic and treatment for insomnia and neurasthenic neurosis.

Longan	
Scientific Classification	
Kingdom:	Plantae

(unranked): Angiosperms

(unranked): Eudicots

(unranked): Rosids

Order: Sapindales

Family: Sapindaceae

Genus: *Dimocarpus*

Species: ***D. longan***

Sources

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Longan>

<https://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/morton/longan.html>

http://www.montosogardens.com/dimocarpus_longan.htm

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