

FGCU Food Forest

Plant Database

Lychee (*Litchi chinensis*)

Quick Facts

Origin: Southern China

Description: An evergreen tree reaching 33–92 ft tall, the lychee bears fleshy fruits with a pink/red rind.

Uses: Food

Harvest: Flowers in early spring and fruits in late June and July.

Flower: The tiny petal less, greenish-white to yellowish flowers are borne in terminal clusters to 30 in (75 cm) long.

Tolerance: Warm, humid summers are best for flowering and fruit development, and a certain amount of winter chilling is necessary for flower bud development. Most varieties need between 100 and 200 hours of standard chilling (32° - 45° F). Cool winters with low rainfall are ideal for lychees.

General Description: An evergreen tree reaching 10–28 metres (33–92 ft) tall, the lychee bears fleshy fruits that are up to 5 cm long and 4 cm wide (2.0 in × 1.6 in). The outside of the fruit is covered by a pink-red, roughly textured rind that is inedible but easily removed to expose a layer of sweet, translucent white flesh. The flavor of the flesh is subacid and distinctive. There is much variation in the size and form of the seed. Normally, it is oblong, up to 3/4 in (20 mm) long, hard, with a shiny, dark-brown coat and is white internally.



- **Native Origin:** The lychee is native to low elevations of the provinces of Kwangtung and Fukien in southern China, where it flourishes especially along rivers and near the seacoast.
- **General History:** It has a long and illustrious history having been praised and pictured in Chinese literature from the earliest known record in 1059 A.D. Cultivation spread over the years through neighboring areas of southeastern Asia and offshore islands. Late in the 17th Century, it was carried to Burma and, 100 years later, to India. It arrived in the West Indies in 1775, was being planted in greenhouses in England and France early in the 19th Century, and Europeans took it to the East Indies. It reached Hawaii in 1873, and Florida in 1883, and was conveyed from Florida to California in 1897. It first fruited at Santa Barbara in 1914. In the 1920's, China's annual crop was 30 million lbs (13.6 million kg). In 1937 (before WW II) the crop of Fukien Province alone was over 35 million lbs (16 million kg). In time, India became second to China in lychee production, total plantings covering about 30,000 acres (12,500 ha). There are also extensive plantings in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Burma, former Indochina, Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines, Queensland, Madagascar, Brazil and South Africa. Lychees are grown mostly in dooryards from northern Queensland to New South Wales, but commercial orchards have been established in the past 20 years, some consisting of 5,000 trees.
- **Distribution:** Lychees are extensively grown in China, India, Thailand, Vietnam and the rest of tropical Southeast Asia, the Indian Subcontinent, and more recently in South Africa, Brazil, the Caribbean, Queensland, California and Florida. They require a warm subtropical to tropical climate that is cool but also frost-free or with only slight winter frosts not below -4°C , and with high summer heat, rainfall, and humidity. Growth is best on well-drained, slightly acidic soils rich in organic matter.
- **Season of Harvest:** Small, yellow flowers appear in drooping, foot-long panicles in early spring and are followed by clusters of delicious, 1.5-inch-diameter fruit in late June and July.
- **Uses:** Lychees can be eaten fresh, out-of-hand. Peeled and pitted, they are commonly added to fruit cups and fruit salads. Lychees stuffed with cottage cheese are served as salad topped with dressing and pecans. Or the fruit may be stuffed with a blend of cream cheese and mayonnaise, or stuffed with pecan meats, and garnished with whipped cream. Sliced lychees, congealed in lime gelatin, are served on lettuce with whipped cream or mayonnaise. The fruits may be layered with pistachio ice cream and whipped cream in parfait glasses, as dessert. Halved lychees have been placed on top of ham during the last hour of baking, or grilled on top of steak. Pureed lychees are added to ice cream mix. Sherbet is made by extracting the juice from fresh, seeded lychees and adding it to a mixture of prepared plain gelatin, hot milk, light cream, sugar and a little lemon juice, and freezing.

Lychee	
Scientific Classification	
Kingdom:	Plantae
(unranked):	Angiosperms
(unranked):	Eudicots
(unranked):	Rosids

Order:	Sapindales
Family:	Sapindaceae
Genus:	<i>Litchi</i>
Species:	<i>L. chinensis</i>

Sources

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lychee#Description>

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

<http://www.crfp.org/pubs/ff/lychee.html>

http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/database/documents/pdf/tree_fact_sheets/litchia.pdf

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