Introduction

This attractive fruit tree has particularly handsome, dark green, glossy, evergreen leaves, three to six inches long, and forms a compact, round-headed canopy. New leaves are an attractive bronze-red. Lychee trees can eventually reach 40 to 50 feet in height with a 20-foot spread but will reach about 30 feet tall 30-years after planting in a landscape creating a wonderful shade, framing, or specimen tree. 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. When ripe, the warty outer surface of the fruit turns bright red and becomes brittle. Easily peeled, the interior sweet, juicy, white flesh surrounds a single, large, glossy brown seed. The trees are quite decorative when laden with fruit. Consider locating the tree in the backyard if you are planting on a residential lot. This will prevent passersby from helping themselves to the delectable fruit.

General Information

Scientific name: Litchi chinensis
Pronunciation: LEE-chee chih-NEN-sis
Common name(s): Lychee
Family: Sapindaceae
USDA hardiness zones: 10A through 11 (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America
Invasive potential: has been evaluated using the IFAS Assessment of the Status of Non-Native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas (Fox et al. 2005). This species is not documented in any undisturbed natural areas in Florida. Thus, it is not considered a problem species and may be used in Florida.
Uses: hedge; fruit; specimen; screen; container or planter; deck or patio
Availability: not native to North America
**Description**

- **Height:** 20 to 30 feet
- **Spread:** 20 to 30 feet
- **Crown uniformity:** symmetrical
- **Crown shape:** round, spreading
- **Crown density:** dense
- **Growth rate:** moderate
- **Texture:** medium

**Foliage**

- **Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)
- **Leaf type:** odd-pinnately compound
- **Leaf margin:** serrate
- **Leaf shape:** lanceolate, oblong, elliptic (oval)
- **Leaf venation:** pinnate
- **Leaf type and persistence:** broadleaf evergreen, evergreen
- **Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches, 4 to 8 inches
- **Leaf color:** green
- **Fall color:** no color change
- **Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

- **Flower color:** yellow
- **Flower characteristics:** showy

**Fruit**

- **Fruit shape:** round
- **Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch
- **Fruit covering:** fleshy
- **Fruit color:** red
- **Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves a litter problem

**Trunk and Branches**

- **Trunk/bark/branches:** branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns
- **Pruning requirement:** needed for strong structure
- **Breakage:** resistant
- **Current year twig color:** green
- **Current year twig thickness:** thin
- **Wood specific gravity:** unknown

**Culture**

- **Light requirement:** full sun
- **Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; loam; acidic; slightly alkaline; well-drained; occasionally wet
- **Drought tolerance:** moderate
- **Aerosol salt tolerance:** none

**Other**

- **Roots:** not a problem
- **Winter interest:** no
- **Outstanding tree:** yes
- **Ozone sensitivity:** unknown
- **Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** unknown
- **Pest resistance:** resistant to pests/diseases

**Use and Management**

The tree may be located near a patio, in a shrub border, or as an accent in the lawn. The thick canopy also makes it well-suited as a screen. Spaced 20 to 30 feet apart, they make a nice median or boulevard tree.

Easily grown in full sun on deep, fertile, well-drained soil, Lychee should be located where it can be protected from strong winds. The dense canopy can catch the wind and the tree can topple over in strong wind. Proper thinning can help prevent this. Plants should receive regular watering and fertilization, as iron deficiency can show in alkaline soil.

Several named cultivars are available for best fruit production: `Brewster`, `Mauritius`, `Sweet Cliff`, `Kate Sessions`, and `Kwai Mi`.

Propagation is by air-layering.
**Pests**
Scales.

**Diseases**
Mushroom root rot can be a problem on soils where oaks were grown.

**Literature Cited**