

# The Changing Season's Greetings

It was Christmas time last year when I noticed some white flowers on a tree in the shrubbery. They were not very showy flowers and could easily be overlooked, particularly because the tree had never had flowers before. It is a Loquat.

Some years ago a friend went on a cruise in the Eastern Mediterranean. He was given some fruits to eat he liked them and as they contained some big seeds, he brought them home and planted them in his greenhouse. The seeds grew and when the plants were potted up he gave one to me. It grew and I kept it in a container placing it outside in summer and taking it into the greenhouse for the winter.

The plant had beautiful leaves, which opened in clusters of pale green shoots growing and darkening to become shiny green. I did not know what it was called until eventually I saw an article in a gardening magazine, which had been written by Mr Roy Lancaster, and there in a picture was my plant. It was shown with a cluster of leaves and fruit, as it would grow in its native land. It was *Eriobotrya Japonica* or Loquat. The magazine told me that it was a native of southern Asia and that it could survive the winter in sheltered parts of the south but would not bear fruit unless kept under glass.

As time past the Loquat grew and prospered but as it increased in size it became too large to go through the greenhouse door. In desperation I planted it in a sheltered part of the shrubbery where the sun could shine upon

it. It liked its new home and grew to become a tree.

At that time there was no talk of global warming. Chlorinated Hydrocarbons refrigerant gasses and aerosols were the current villains of the atmosphere and every dilemma was attributed to the hole in the ozone layer. Now things have moved on and Global Warming is with us not only by the reports and predictions of the scientists but also visibly as the weather and the countryside around us changes. So what would happen to the flowers on the tree in the shrubbery?

I watched carefully the flowers went and in their place small round green nodules appeared. Often as I walked by I looked to see if they were still there, they were but they did not seem to grow at all. Easter came before I began to see that they were getting larger. Then slowly they became larger until they looked like two bunches of small green apricots.

The small fruits gradually changed losing their green colour and becoming pale yellow. Now I had a problem because I did not know what a ripe Loquat looked like. There are however those who do not need previous experience to know when food is edible. One day I realised that my two bunches had now become one. Forcing my way into the shrubbery I discovered that the birds had sampled the fruit and only fragments remained on the ground below the tree.

The time for harvest had arrived. I gathered the four fruits from the remaining bunch. These now

looked even more like apricots. It was one of those hopeful moments. I tasted them. They were sweet, slightly acid and very pleasant. A few more would have been very acceptable.

I saved the large seeds and planted them as yet nothing has happened but there is time.

Most of the information about Global Warming and the effect that it has or will have upon our lives is very frightening. The polar ice caps will melt. Sea levels will rise. Much of our land will be inundated by the sea and floods gales and drought will make our lives very unpleasant. Now I do not wish to diminish the efforts that are being made to avert catastrophe. We must all consider our life style and do what we can to prevent the destruction of the world in which we live.

However perhaps it is permissible at this Christmas season to look to the brighter side of the situation. If winters are becoming warmer in Goxhill I shall be hoping that there will not be too much of the "Deep and Crisp and Even." The only whiteness that I hope for and anxiously await will be that of the little bunches of white flowers.

I cannot tell you where to find a Loquat tree but if you have a warm sheltered spot in your garden you could perhaps visit a Nursery to find Peaches Pomegranates and Pineapples to grow in Goxhill next year. I wish you all a very happy Christmas and a fruitful New Year

*Maurice Brawn.*