



Citrus Trees

Citrus plants are easy to grow with appropriate care, and will be a wonderful addition to your yard or container garden. Not only are the trees gorgeous and sweet smelling, they will provide highly nutritious fresh fruit and add a special ‘zing’ to your recipes. Cold-hardy varieties that receive recommended care may grow successfully in our coastal and deep south area. All our varieties are self-fertile.

KUMQUATS - ‘Meiwa’

One of the most popular citrus for the home garden. Attractive shrub-like tree, and the bright orange, round 1.5 inch fruit which can be eaten peel and all. The fruit may also be used in making jellies, marmalade and candies. Kumquats are the most cold hardy of the commonly grown citrus, tolerating temperatures as low as 18 degrees. Perfect for container gardening.

SATSUMAS - 4 varieties - ‘Owari’ , ‘Brown Select’ , ‘LA Early’ , ‘St. Anne’

Satsumas are seedless and wonderfully sweet. The rind separates easily from the flesh. ‘Owari’ and ‘Brown Select’ are classic varieties. ‘LA Early’ and ‘St. Anne’ were developed especially for our hot, humid climate within the last ten yrs. at the Louisiana Ag. Center. Mature trees are cold-hardy down to 18 degrees in the yard.

MEYER LEMONS – “Darlings of the culinary world”

A cross between a lemon and a mandarin, Myers are sweeter and much less tart than regular lemons. Suddenly very popular due to the attention received from well-known chefs, this tree has the best fragrance of any of the citrus (according to many people). Mature trees are cold-hardy down to 20 degrees in the yard, and can also be grown in containers. The main crop of fruit ripens in the summer, but you may get some flowers and fruit all year.

NAVEL ORANGES - ‘Washington’

This orange will bring very fragrant white blooms and early-maturing, seedless fruit to your table year after year! Cold hardy down to 25 degrees. It is recommended to keep these in a container, unless you can plant them on the south side of a warm wall and protect when the temps drop.

GRAPEFRUIT – ‘Ruby Red’

The fruit looks like ordinary grapefruit, except the rind is thicker and ripens with a red hue. The pulp is sweet and lots of juice is produced. Cold hardy down to 20 degrees, it should be pruned to 3-4 ft. tall and kept in a container.

LIMES – ‘Persian’ & ‘Key’

‘Persian’ is the commercial lime seen in supermarkets. It is cold hardy to about 25 degrees, so it is best kept in a container and protected. Key Limes have a mild, lemon-lime flavor, perfect for pies. Must be kept in a container, though, as they will be damaged if there is a freeze.

VARIEGATED PINK LEMONS – ‘Eureka’

A beautiful little tree! Apple-green leaves have white edges. Fruit is green streaked with gold when young & ripens to pale yellow. Pink flesh produces clear juice. Not frost tolerant, so keep your tree in a container and bring it inside if there is a freeze.



Planting Citrus Trees in the Ground

General info:

In Zone 8, citrus trees must be protected from northern winds in winter. Choose a site that is on the south or east end of a building. If that is not possible, plant among other trees to keep winter winds and frost off of the citrus trees. Citrus trees can take more shade than other fruit trees, but still need at least 5 hours of full sun or 7 hours of filtered sun each day.

Citrus trees will not tolerate wet feet, and must be planted in well-drained soil. Do not plant too deep; you want the top of the root ball level or slightly higher than the surrounding grade. It is good to put down mulch or pine straw, but be sure **NOT** to pile dirt over the root ball – the roots need to breathe.

Covering your citrus trees when a freeze is expected is highly recommended, especially while the trees are young. When covering, be sure to use fabric that can lock in the heat. Also, be sure it drapes all the way to the ground so the fabric can catch and trap the heat radiating up from the ground. We have also found that water buckets make cheap heaters. Take a 5gal bucket or something similar (the larger the better) and fill it with water. Then place the container beside the trunk underneath the fabric cover. During a hard freeze, only the top of the water will freeze. The unfrozen water in the bucket will radiate heat and help keep the tree from freezing. Another trick-of-the-trade is to put pipe insulation on the trunk and main branches. This is also popular for older trees that cannot be covered as easily.

Fertilizing/Watering:

Fertilize in spring and summer. Keep fertilizer at least 6” away from the trunk. Do not dump large amounts in one spot or root burn may occur.

Pruning:

Never trim a citrus tree in the fall because this will stimulate new growth that will be susceptible to a freeze. The best time to prune is just after danger of frost has past. Lightly trim long runners to help them bush, but severe trimming is not necessary unless the tree is becoming too big for its space.

Planting Citrus Trees in a Container

General info:

- Choose a pot in the 30-36 inch diameter range or about the size of a 15 gallon nursery pot. Clay is usually preferred as plastic may transmit the sun’s heat enough to damage roots. Whatever kind of container you choose, make sure it has good drainage – drill extra holes if in doubt. It’s a good idea to raise it slightly off the ground to facilitate drainage and air circulation.
- Use a premixed sterile potting soil designed for container plants. Never use ordinary garden soil as it may be too dense or contain harmful bacteria or spores.

Fertilizing/Watering:

- Plants in containers generally require more frequent watering than those planted outside, and citrus are no exception. The rule is to water when the top 2-3 inches of soil are dry. Soak the rootball thoroughly until water drains out the bottom.
- Use a complete fertilizer blended for the needs of citrus trees (ie: Citrus-tone, Ferti-lome) and follow the directions on the label for container-grown plants. When the mature foliage on your citrus trees is deep, rich green, you know you have the correct fertilizer application.

Pruning:

- You can prune almost any time of year, keeping in mind that cutting the tree back in fall or early winter may stimulate tender growth and late pruning may affect flowering the next spring.