



CITRUS TREES

Dwarf citrus trees make a pretty and fragrant house plant *if* you have enough light to keep them happy. If the flowers are pollinated, you will also be able to harvest some fruit in the fall or winter (a few varieties of citrus can fruit year-round.)

TEMPERATURE: Citrus will tolerate plenty of summer heat, but require temperatures above 50°F during the winter. Excessively hot, dry air inside may be a problem for your citrus, and we recommend placing it away from a heat source. Light mistings early in the day will also help counteract the dry air of central heating and air-conditioning.

LIGHT: Direct morning or late afternoon sunlight, very bright indirect light, or fluorescent lights placed close to the plant for maximum benefit. Citrus trees are ideal plants for sun rooms or large, south-facing windows. To avoid sunburn damage, do not place your tree outside in direct mid-day sun in the summer. Place it where it will receive a few hours of direct sun early in the morning, or late in the afternoon. Fluorescent lights should be no more than 18” above the plant if you use them to supplement or replace direct sunlight.

WATERING: Room temperature water applied when surface soil is dry to the touch, or, in larger containers, when dry an inch or two into the root ball. Water thoroughly, until some water appears at the bottom drainage holes, but do not allow the pot to sit in water longer than 15 minutes or so. Occasionally leach the soil by running water through it for several minutes—this will remove any salts that may have accumulated from the tap water or fertilizers. Over-watering is the most common way that people kill their house plants, so feel the soil before watering to determine how dry it is.

FERTILIZING: In spring and summer, apply a general purpose fertilizer (preferably one containing micro-nutrients or “trace” elements) every 3 to 4 weeks. Some growers recommend an occasional application of Epsom salts (1 tablespoon per 2-gallons of water).

REPOTTING: Citrus require good drainage, so clay pots work best. Always use a container with a drainage hole, and use a planting mix that has been amended with good drainage materials (like sand, fine gravel, or perlite.) Use a pot size that comfortably holds the root ball—too large a container will cause the plant to stay too wet.

MAINTENANCE: Prune a citrus after fruiting and as needed to keep an attractive shape. Watch for pests, especially mealy bug and spider mites. It is normal for a citrus to drop some of its fruit as they begin to enlarge. If your plant is outside when flowering, bees will pollinate the flowers. If inside, use a small artist’s paint brush to spread pollen from flower to flower.

Suggested **citrus varieties** suitable for growing in containers, making good plants for sunny windows and sunrooms:

CALAMONDIN ORANGE—small, attractive bitter fruit that can be used for marmalade.

NAVEL ORANGE—seedless sweet orange, easily peeled, can be used for juice.

VALENCIA ORANGE—seedless sweet orange, good for eating or juice (used commercially).

MEYER LEMON—produces fruit throughout the year, very juicy.

KEY LIME—produces fruit throughout the year, small yellow lime, cold sensitive.

PERSIAN LIME—seedless, large green fruit when mature.

KUMQUAT—semi-sweet fruit used in preserves and candied fruit, more cold hardy.

MANDARIN (Satsuma) TANGERINE—tasty, juicy fruit, more cold hardy.

*Choose a more cold hardy variety if your greenhouse or sunroom temperatures drop below 50°F during the winter.