



GROWING CITRUS IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

Packed with vitamin C, citrus trees have shiny evergreen leaves, fragrant flowers, and attractive fruits that hang for months. Although it's not so practical to grow large citrus trees outdoors in our climate, it is possible to enhance a sunny area in your home or on a patio with a containerized dwarf citrus plant. The fruits from a smaller citrus plant grown in a container are the same size as the fruits from a full-grown citrus tree, and the flavors are just as delicious!

VARIETIES & SELECTION



All citrus fruits are easily damaged by frost, but some citrus plants (leaves and wood) are more cold-resistant: limes = least hardy; oranges = slightly harder; kumquats = most hardy. The varieties that tend to do well in our area include:

- Improved Meyer Lemon
- Dwarf Washington Navel
- Eureka Lemon
- Calamondin
- Bearss Seedless Lime
- Kumquat

Meyer lemons are rounder and sweeter than most lemons with thin, slightly orange skin—actually a sour orange; not a true lemon! Fruits usually form in late winter or early spring, but indoors, they are unpredictable and can produce at any time. Fruit gets sweeter as it hangs on the tree. Meyer lemons don't ship well (thin skin) and thus, are not widely sold commercially.

TIP: Choose sturdy, nursery-raised plants with only a few fruits/flowers; they'll have sturdier tops and better root development.

SUNLIGHT



Citrus plants do best in full sun; at least 6–8 hours of direct sunlight daily—lots of light promotes blooming! If kept indoors for winter, use grow lights for 12 hours per day.

WATER



Water thoroughly (until it drips from drainage holes).

- Soil should dry down about 2–3 inches between waterings, like most containerized plants.
- Never wait until the leaves wilt to water; the stress can cause developing fruit to drop, and prolonged drought causes leaf-drop and may even kill the plant.
- In winter, water less and do not fertilize (lower light levels).

FERTILIZER



Feed with organic acid fertilizer in spring and summer prior to the flush of new growth, and again in late August. Use *G&B Citrus & Fruit Tree Fertilizer* or *G&B Rhododendron, Azalea & Camellia Fertilizer*—both organic, probiotic, people and pet safe, and feed for several months.

PRUNING & REPOTTING



Dwarf citrus can grow 6–8 feet, but can be pruned any time to keep plant compact and bushy. If needed, repot in early spring at signs of new growth; every 3 years or so.

- Citrus prefers being root-bound to encourage blooming; also reduces the possibility of root rot due to overwatering.
- Don't want to repot in a larger container? Treat as a bonsai: Remove plant from pot, trim some top growth and roots, add fresh potting soil (*G&B Palm, Cactus & Citrus Planting Mix* or *G&B Acid Planting Mix*), and replant in same size pot.

TEMPERATURE



Many folks who grow citrus in the Pacific Northwest keep them outdoors almost year-round.

- Citrus plants are hardy to Zone 9—they need cool temps in winter, but cannot tolerate much below freezing.
- For winter protection, move containerized plants close to the house, out of wind and rain; water as needed.
- If temperatures drop below 30°F, bring plants into a more protected area where temps are above freezing (garage).
- Keep away from fireplaces/heat vents. Citrus loses leaves in heat or with sudden changes in temperature, humidity, or light (this is normal); foliage grows back when environment stabilizes. Return plants outdoors when temps reach 29°F.
- In spring, when nighttime temperatures consistently reach 50°F (late April), bring plants outside again. Choose a site with morning sun and afternoon shade. As plants acclimate to sun, they can be gradually moved to a full sun location.
- In fall, when nighttime temps begin to drop below 50°F, bring citrus indoors to a cool, bright location (late October).

PESTS



A few pests are common to citrus plants, especially indoors: aphids, spider mites, mealybaugs, scale

- Look for honeydew as an indicator of insect problems.
- Prevention is key—inspect plants often to catch problems early, and spray monthly with horticultural oil.
- Use insecticidal soap, neem oil, horticultural oil, or spinosad when pests are present (ask our experts for product help).