

JUST FRUITS

AND EXOTICS

CITRUS

INTRODUCTION

Citrus fruits are among the most delicious and easy to grow fruits available! Containers allow folks in temperate climates or apartments to grow citrus. In Zones 8 and 9, citrus can be planted in the ground with a little help from their friends. In Zone 10, you are home free. Trust us – there is nothing as good as fresh homegrown oranges, grapefruit, lemons and limes! With a few simple steps, anyone can grow their own citrus.

CHOOSING A VARIETY

Citrus varieties differ in the type and quality of fruit, cold hardiness and adult tree size. Our varieties fall into three groups: Easy-to-grow, Moderately Cold-hardy, and Container citrus. Our Easy-to-grow varieties include those plants tolerating freezes of 20. F or less. In this group are kumquats, satsumas, tangerines, sour oranges and some varieties of limes and lemons. Our Moderately cold-hardy fruit include sweet oranges and grapefruit; these varieties have freeze tolerances of between 20-26.F. Container citrus cannot tolerate frosts and freezes and must be inside during freezing weather. Key limes and blood oranges fall into the Container citrus group. For successful outdoor plantings in Zones 8 and 9, we cannot overemphasize the importance of choosing a plant grafted onto the correct rootstock. We highly recommend using citrus grafted onto Trifoliate Orange rootstocks. These varieties help keep plants dormant during cold spells when new foliage may be damaged by cold temperatures. Check the rootstock on your citrus to learn how to grow it successfully.

PLANTING + CULTURE

SOIL PREPARATION AND PLANTING

In general, cold winds come from the north and west. Never plant citrus in the North wind! Cold air drains down slopes, so the tops and sides of hills are warmer than low spots. Overhanging trees help trap heat, as do ponds or other water bodies. Citrus on the south or east of buildings will be protected from north winds and will receive heat radiated from the house. Well-drained sandy loam soils are preferred, but citrus will grow on many soil types if good drainage is provided. Citrus will grow more vigorously and produce more fruit in full sun, at least 6 hours in the afternoon. You can also grow citrus under pine trees as long as you have shifting light all day long.

Citrus on trifoliate orange rootstock require somewhat acid soil (pH 5.5-6.0). If you're in doubt about the pH of your soil, take a soil sample to the Cooperative Extension Agent in your county for a soil test. Adjust soil acidity as necessary. Citrus on its own root (no graft) like a more alkaline soil (6.0-6.5).

Gently remove the plant from the pot and place in the planting hole. To avoid burying too deep, make sure plant is positioned with the top most roots at the soil line. Fill the planting hole with the mix of soil and organic matter; gently tamp it in. Water thoroughly to settle the roots and eliminate air pockets. Do NOT put fertilizer in the planting hole. Only apply fertilizer if it is the correct time of year. If desired, construct a water basin around the base of the tree approximately 36" in diameter. Keep the area under the canopy of the tree clear of grass and weeds to minimize competition for water and nutrients. Mulch this area with 2-3" of mulch, leaving an area about 2' from the trunk mulch free or at most only ½" thick. Citrus like their roots on top and slightly exposed. Citrus that grow into trees such as satsumas and grapefruit should be spaced 15 feet apart while bushy citrus plants such as kumquats may be spaced as closely as 10'.

FERTILIZATION

Citrus trees are heavy feeders. Our grafted citrus is on acid loving rootstock so you must use a fertilizer for Acid Loving plants. Non-grafted citrus need an alkaline type of fertilizer. Below are some fertilizer choices depending on the type of citrus you have.

Starter Fertilizer & Soil (Apply at Planting)	Fertilizer to Maintain (Apply Early March, Late May, & Late July)
Espoma Bio-tone® Starter Plus Mix Peat Moss in Soil	Espoma Citrus-tone®

Notes:

- Follow Instructions on Bag for how much to apply each time.
- Fertilizing Zones 8 and below: Months to Fertilize vary based on your zone. Fertilize 3 times per year. For Citrus in Zone 8 and below We recommend the 1st fertilization starting after the last Freeze of the winter (Late February/Early March in zones 8) & the last Fertilization being no later than August or even June/July in some of the colder zones 7 & below.)
- For Zones 9 and above: You may follow the Espoma Citrus-tone® Fact Sheet recommendations of; Late Winter January/February pre-bloom application to enhance flowering, Late Spring May/June Post-bloom application to encourage better fruit set, and Late Fall September/October application to ensure overall nutrient needs are met.
- Fertilizing too late in the year in colder climates will promote new growth, which will be subject to freeze damage.

Spread the fertilizer evenly under the entire canopy of the plant, avoiding a 6 inch area around the trunk. Water or rake in. If using Espoma fertilizer and you have sandy soil, be sure to also put a ½ inch layer of rotted pine bark or rotter leaves on top of fertilizer.

See our “Planting a Tree Correctly” Guide & Espoma Bio-tone® and Citrus-tone® Fact Sheets on our website for more info.

WATER

Water thoroughly twice a week on light soils and once a week on clay soils. Soak the entire root system deeply – this usually takes 50-60 minutes. Established citrus should receive at least 1” of water each week. Water regularly, especially during dry periods. Fruit may drop prematurely if insufficiently irrigated during dry spells.

PRUNING + CARE

Prune in June/July to maintain height and to thin out interior for good air circulation. At anytime remove dead, damaged, crossed or diseased limbs, water sprouts and rootstock suckers. Trim back excessive growth to keep an even shaped canopy. Make all cuts flush with the limb or the next largest branch. Do not leave stubs. Never prune in winter as this will stimulate growth.

COLD PROTECTION

During the first few years, young trees need frost protection, but many varieties can be left unattended once they’re 4-5 years old. We recommend all citrus be protected during the first 2 years in the ground when the temperature falls to 27° and lower. In Fall, as the chance of frosts increase, place support wires around the tree. Use a two-layer system of burlap or sheets covered by plastic sheeting and tie to the wires. Remove mulch from inside the ring to aid in heat absorption during the day. Tree must be uncovered or vented during the day to prevent overheating. If your tree is damaged by frost, as long as the plant does not freeze to below the graft, the tree will regrow.

INSECTS + DISEASE

Citrus have few disease or insect problems. The major pests in North Florida are Leaf Miners and Leaf and Bark Scales. For Leaf Miners, use an organic spray containing Spinosad. For Scale use a combination of Neem Oil and summer-weight Dormant Oil in midsummer.

VARIETIES

A detailed Variety List can be found on our website: justfruitsandexotics.com