

# how to grow citrus

## Choosing the Right Variety

**Citrus fruit are nutritious and very easy to grow in your garden.**

Make sure you choose the right variety for your region, especially if you live in a colder climate as citrus are quite frost tender. Some of the more common types of citrus are lemons, oranges, mandarins, grapefruit and limes.

If you prefer, you can grow citrus successfully in pots, and this means you can shift them to porches or sheltered areas during frosts, especially in the colder regions.

## Regional Varieties

### You Can Try...

Not all citrus fruit at the same time – but the bulk of them fruit in winter. You can extend your season by planting a particular variety that produce for longer throughout a season.

▶ **MANDARINS**  
Mandarin **Encore** ripens November, December and January.

▶ **TANGELOS**  
Tangelo **Seminole** ripens in November.

▶ **ORANGES**  
Harwood **Late** crops from August through to January/February. The fruit also stays on the tree without becoming dry.

▶ **LEMONS**  
The **Yen Ben** lemon variety has replaced the **Lisbon** as the recommended true lemon. If you want a good reliable lemon you can't beat **Meyer Lemon**.



## Planting

**Citrus prefer warmer climates, but they can be grown in cooler regions as long as you select the right site.**

Choose a warm sunny north-facing, sheltered site with fertile well-drained soil. Citrus do not like having 'wet feet' (*very wet soil*), or being exposed to wind.

- 1 Prepare the planting site by digging a hole twice as wide and as deep as the container the tree came in.
- 2 Add generous amounts of **Daltons Enriched Compost** or **Daltons Premium Garden Mix** to the hole and mix in well.
- 3 Make a mound at the bottom of the hole in the middle, this is where the rootball will sit and will ensure better drainage especially in areas with heavy clay soil.
- 4 Remove the plant from the pot and place it in the hole.
- 5 Replace the soil around the rootball and pat it to make it compact and firm.
- 6 When the tree sits in the ground the base of the stem should be slightly higher than ground level to prevent water pooling around the trunk and potentially causing rot.
- 7 Stake the tree for extra support if required and apply a generous layer of **Daltons Mulch & Grow** around the top but not touching the trunk of your tree.

## Growing in Containers

Citrus also grow successfully in pots and containers, so if you are short on space this is a great option. Some varieties to try are Meyer Lemon, Clementine or Encore Mandarin and Bearrs Lime as these all have a small compact form. Growing citrus in containers also means you can shift them to porches or sheltered areas during frosts, especially in cooler climates. Use **Daltons Premium Tub Mix** which has the correct slow release of nutrients and also helps with water retention. Feed your container citrus with **Daltons Garden Time™ Fruit & Citrus Fertiliser** using the schedule in the Feeding and Watering section. Be sure to water your container citrus frequently as they will easily dry out, especially during summer.



## Professional tips with Xanthe White

**"Citrus can be quite frost tender, so if you are growing them in colder climates protect them with a frost cloth, or alternatively; spray with copper oxychloride which will help harden up leaves and make them more robust in case of early frost."**



## Fruiting

Realistically it will take three to four years before you can expect regular cropping from your citrus trees. In those first three to four years, and in particular the first three, pick off any young fruit before they develop. This helps the tree to establish good strong foundations instead of putting its energy into bearing fruit. It will last much longer and be much healthier if you do this.

## Feeding and Watering

**Healthy trees are less prone to pest and diseases so regular feeding and attention is important to improve the plants vitality and fruit cropping.**

Citrus are known as 'heavy feeders' and need regular applications of citrus fertiliser. Apply **Daltons Garden Time™ Fruit & Citrus Fertiliser** just outside the 'drip line' of the branches. Dig the fertiliser in lightly and water in well so the tree has the best chance of absorbing the nutrients.

### Citrus Feeding Schedule

#### February to mid-April

Feed with **Daltons Garden Time™ Fruit & Citrus Fertiliser** every 4-6 weeks.

#### April to September

Do not fertilise during winter.

#### October to Christmas

Feed with **Daltons Garden Time™ Fruit & Citrus Fertiliser** every 4-6 weeks.

Citrus trees do require deep watering several times a year, especially during periods of insufficient rainfall. If your tree is not receiving regular watering and adequate nutrition it can become stressed, causing poor growth and in turn poor cropping and small hard skinned fruit. Regularly water your tree, especially throughout the summer months and keep a good layer of mulch around the tree to retain moisture, add nutrition and suppress weeds.



## Pests and Diseases

**Citrus fruit trees do not suffer from any major debilitating pests and diseases.**

However scale insects are a common problem and attract a fungus called sooty mould. Scale insects suck the sap out of leaves and produce a sticky sweet substance called honey dew. This dew then attracts the growth of the sooty mould which covers much of the leaves, reducing the plants ability to photosynthesise, which in turn affects its growth and fruit production. The key to treating this problem is to get rid of the insects.

### Treatment Of Scale And Sooty Mould

- 1 Spray the insects with an oil based spray such as Neem Oil or Conqueror Oil – good coverage is very important, especially on the undersides of the leaves where the insects typically reside.
- 2 Once the insects are dead there is no more 'food' for the sooty mould to grow on so it will begin to disappear. However, if you want to hasten this process you can remove the sooty mould with a high pressure hose – lemon tree leaves are robust enough to withstand this.

### General Disease Maintenance

It is a good idea to regularly use a copper spray over winter to help prevent any fungal disease in the upcoming spring growth. The fungal spores on leaves are killed by the copper.

## Gardening Terms Explained

- ▶ **FROST TENDER** Sensitive to frost.
- ▶ **HEAVY FEEDERS** A plant that requires more fertiliser and nutrients to grow successfully.
- ▶ **PHOTOSYNTHESE** The process where a plant converts light into energy to grow.
- ▶ **DRIP LINE** Directly under the outer circumference of the tree's branches.
- ▶ **WET FEET** Roots that are sitting in very wet soil.
- ▶ **CROPPING** The amount of fruit on a tree.
- ▶ **ROOT BALL** The roots and soil amassed at the bottom of a plant.



## Products to try

Daltons Mulch & Grow | Daltons Premium Garden Mix  
Daltons Enriched Compost | Daltons Garden Time™ Fruit & Citrus Fertiliser