





Citrus (spp.)

Type	Deciduous/ Evergreen	Height x Width (metres)	Spacing (metres)	Pollinator	Soil type	Sun	Moisture	Shelter	Plant	Harvest
	E	3-6 x 4	5-10	N				Y	Spring or autumn	Winter/ spring

Site

- Most citrus trees are subtropical or tropical and some of them don't tolerate temperatures below freezing level.
- Prefer deep, slightly acidic soil, but will grow on most soils – use trifoliata rootstock on heavy clay.
- Need excellent drainage, but also have very shallow feeder roots, so the soil needs to retain moisture.
- *Grapefruit* needs warmth to develop good flavour, and moisture to be juicy.
- *Lemon* is fairly frost hardy, likes a warm summer, mild winter, full sun, and shelter from wind.
- *Lemonade* is not at all fussy.
- *Lime* needs similar conditions to lemon, but is very frost sensitive when young – needs protection for the first few years in colder areas.
- *Mandarin* needs more heat than other citrus. Protect young trees from heavy frost.
- *Orange* trees need protection from frost when young. Don't water as much in autumn, as the new growth can be damaged in winter. Too much water makes the oranges less sweet.
- Water daily during the first summer, and keep them moist during dry periods and when the fruit is developing.
- Keep underneath the tree clear of plants to allow free air movement, to reduce the risk of diseases.
- Have very shallow feeder roots and dislike competition from other plants – keep them mulched with a thick layer of acidic mulch e.g. well-rotted compost, manure, pine needles, rinsed seaweed.
- Are 'gross feeders', so they need regular fertilising, especially with nitrogen (e.g. poultry manure, blood and bone, fishmeal) in autumn and spring when they put on a lot of growth (limes prefer less nitrogen). Yellowy leaves, blotches, stunted growth and early leaf fall are signs that the tree is undernourished.
- Self-fertile, pollinated by bees and other insects.

Training & pruning

- In late winter of the first year, shorten the main branches by one-third, to encourage growth in a *rounded* shape.
- Remove all the flower buds in the first year to let the roots get established.
- Thin the fruit to ensure it gets to a good size and is sweet and juicy.
- After fruiting has finished, remove any dead, diseased or criss-crossing branches.
- Lemons and some of the bushy mandarins need to have the older branches thinned out occasionally to allow sunlight and air circulation.

Care

- Attractive evergreen trees, easy to train, but need quite a bit of care to get juicy, tasty fruit.
- Great grown in containers – in colder places, move them inside for the winter.
- Plant in spring after the big frosts have finished, adding some well-rotted manure to the planting hole.



- Prune to keep the tree at the height you want.
- Whenever you pick the fruit, shorten any spindly old branches (see diagram) to a strong lateral, to encourage the development of fresh fruiting wood.
- Remove any growth from the rootstock.

Companions

- Guavas, Mediterranean herbs e.g. lavender, catnip, rosemary – plant at the edges of the tree's dripline, not directly under the tree.

Harvest

- Bear fruit within 2–3 years.
- Cut off the fruit with secateurs so you don't damage the fruiting laterals.
- Eat fresh or add to desserts, baking, chutneys and preserves.
- *Grapefruit* ripens late autumn to early spring. Leave on the tree to ripen.
- *Lemon* fruits all year. Fruit ripens about 6–8 months after flowering, and will ripen indoors if picked unripe. Keeps well.
- *Lemonade* is delicious to eat straight from the tree.

- *Limes* ripen in either midsummer or midwinter. Can be left on the tree for some time. Pick when the skin is lemon-green and feels a little soft.
- *Mandarins* need to be picked when they're ripe – they dry out if they're left on the tree.
- *Orange* fruits when 7–8 years old. Fruit ripens over many weeks and can be left on the tree for up to 6 months, picking them fresh as you want them.

Health

- High levels of vitamins A and C, antioxidants, and other beneficial compounds.

Recommended varieties

Grapefruit: Golden Special (Sept–Dec)

Lemon: Meyer (year-round), Genoa (Sept), Yen Ben (July/Aug)

Lemonade: (Sept)

Orange: Washington Navel (Aug), Ruby Blood (Oct), Harward Late (Nov)

Mandarin: Clementine (July), Encore (Sept), Miho for containers (very early winter)

Tangelo: Seminole (Sept)

Lime: Bearss (June–Aug), Tahitian (Sept)



Citrus laterals

Top – healthy

Bottom – old and spindly, needs to be shortened