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Citrus Trees Fact Sheet

Citrus trees offer glossy green foliage year round, with sweetly scented flowers and beautiful and edible fruit. There are few trees that are as ornamental and practical as a citrus tree. Citrus are a must for every back yard. Citrus trees include: Cumquats, Grapefruit, Lemons, Limes, Mandarins, Oranges, Tangelos, Pumelos and various others.

Growing Conditions

Citrus trees prefer a full sun position. They will grow well with up to half a day of sun, but will produce more foliage and less flowers and fruit with less direct sunlight. They need to be protected from frost, which damages the foliage and fruit, and from wind. Good drainage is necessary for all citrus. Soils must therefore be well drained. Planting citrus in raised beds or pots is the best option if the drainage is poor. The addition of compost to the soil may help improve the drainage. Soils should be neutral to acid in pH to successfully grow citrus. Citrus are shallow-rooted trees and thus require regular watering especially during the hot summer months. Avoid digging or planting around the base of the tree. Keep the area under the tree free of grass and mulch well. Smaller varieties of citrus are ideal grown in large pots or tubs. Try Cumquats, Myer Lemons, Tahitian and Kaffir Limes.



Mulching

Mulch Citrus in spring to conserve moisture during the hot summer months. Be careful not to build the mulch up around the trunk of the trees, as this may cause collar rot. Remove the previous years mulch before putting a new layer down.

Feeding

Citrus should be fertilised with Fruit & Citrus Food in early September and again in early March. In addition to this, under the mulch layer, a layer of manure and compost may be spread. Some older leaves may yellow as flowering is initiated. If the trees are well fertilised, mulched and watered during summer then an autumn application of fertiliser should be all that is required to keep the leaves green in winter. Alternatively, a liquid fertiliser may be used in winter as a quick green up.



Pruning

Pruning is really only necessary to remove dead wood and to cut out branches that are rubbing against each other; or to shape the tree as desired. Citrus Gall Wasp is prevalent in this area, so prune out all galls. Remove all shoots that come from below the graft.

Watering

Citrus are not deep rooted trees and thus require regular watering. Care must be taken to ensure they have adequate water during the hot summer months. Do not over water citrus trees.

Pests

Aphids: usually found on new growth, particularly in spring and autumn. Squash by hand or use Garlic and Chilli sprays, Pyrethrum, or Confidor.

Scales: various types of scale affect citrus trees. These will be different colours, and are usually found near the mid vein and on the stems. Again, spring and autumn are the usual seasons when these are more prevalent. Squash by hand or spray with White Oil, making sure to cover the insects.

Citrus Leaf Miner: These leave silvery trails in the leaf and the leaf edges curl inwards. Control using White Oil.

Citrus Gall Wasp: Swellings appear in the stems as the Wasp lays its eggs in the stems. There is no effective chemical control for these Wasps. Prune off all galls as they appear and destroy the galls. This should be done before August each year as this is when the wasps hatch out and re – infest the tree and neighbouring trees. Yellow sticky traps hung in the tree can trap the adult Wasps as they fly around the tree.

Sooty Mould and Ants: these are secondary problems arising from another pest problem. The presence of Sooty Mould and / or Ants is usually an indication that there is a Scale or Aphid problem. The Ants and Sooty Mould feed from the sticky exudate of the Scale and Aphids. Control the Scale or Aphids and these other problems will disappear.



Mineral Deficiencies And Other Problems

Iron Deficiency

Yellowing, mainly of the newer growth, with the veins standing out in green. Apply Chelated Iron at recommended rate. The pH of the soil may be too alkaline, therefore the iron is inaccessible to the plant. A trace element mixture may be added to the soil, to cover various other deficiencies.



Lack of Fruit

Trees purchased with fruit on may not fruit for several years after planting. It is best to remove the developing fruit early on young trees, so that more energy is used up in root and foliage growth to establish a strong tree. Heavy crops of fruit may result in poor fruit set and smaller sized fruit. To avoid these problems it is best to thin out heavy crops, by thinning the just set fruit on each branch by half to two thirds. Wheeny Grapefruit tend to fruit every second year and Mandarins may produce such dense growth they fail to fruit. Other causes usually result from uneven growing conditions, over fertilising and drought or waterlogging.

Cumquats

Cumquat Marumi (syn. Calamondin) - *Citrus mitis*. Prolific small round orange fruits are produced during autumn and winter. This plant is often used in tubs and the fruits are excellent for making preserves, marmalade and liqueurs. This variety has been sold in Australia for many years as Cumquat Marumi until recently overseas visitors identified it as the Calamondin. Sometimes a variegated version of this plant is available which is smaller growing. It has light green and creamy yellow foliage and fruit.

Cumquat Nagami (The Teardrop Cumquat) - *Fortunella margarita*. Attractive oval yellow fruit during autumn/winter on a compact bushy plant, which is ideal for growing in tubs. The fruit can be used for making liqueurs, preserves or marmalade.

Calamondin (AKA Marumi) These fruit several times a year with the main crop in winter. Grows to about 3 – 4 m.

Grapefruit

Grapefruit Marsh - *Citrus paradisi var.*. Large, pale yellow fruit with a smooth skin and virtually no seeds. This variety is best suited to the hot inland areas. It is a consistent and heavy bearer, which matures in late summer and autumn. Grows 4-6m.

Grapefruit Wheeny - *Citrus paradisi var.*. Very large, juicy fruit, thin skinned and seedy are produced prolifically every second year. This variety is more suitable for coastal areas and will tolerate cooler conditions than other grapefruit. It has a flavour like a lemon.

Lemons

Lemon Eureka - *Citrus limon var.*. A very vigorous, almost thornless tree that produces medium to large juicy fruit mainly during autumn and winter. A number of smaller crops may be produced during the summer. The best citrus for most areas of Australia, except for very cold. They have relatively few seeds and the tree is almost thornless. Grows to about 4m.

Lemon Lisbon - *Citrus limon var.*. A smooth skinned, large juicy lemon produced on a thorny tree most of the year. This variety is able to withstand very cold winter temperatures. Grows to 3-4m.

Lemon Meyer - *Citrus limon var.*. Round, orange coloured fruit with a thin rind are produced during autumn and winter. The fruit is juicy and less acid than other lemons and the tree is small to medium in size making it ideal for growing in pots. A small tree (2m).

Limes

Lime Tahitian - *Citrus latifolia*. This citrus makes an excellent tub specimen, as it is a small tree. It has pale yellow, thin skinned fruit with a low acid content and is seedless. It has a mild lime taste, no seeds and is a bit bigger than a golf ball. The fruit matures in autumn. It has a short fruiting season (1 month) It is cold tolerant and grows 3 – 4 m

West Indian – This is the best flavoured lime but is more suited to tropics and subtropics. It has a small fruit about the size of 10cents and is thorny. The West Indian or Mexican lime is prone to a virus disease in Australia and is thus rarely grown.

Kaffir Lime- The leaves are used in cooking. The zest is excellent for flavour. The fruit and the juice are useless. A great pot plant and grows to 3-4m.

Mandarin

Mandarin Ellendale - *Citrus reticulata* var.. This variety has very large, orange-coloured fruit. It is relatively easily peeled and juicy with a rich flavour. If left on the tree for too long the fruit tends to granulate.

Mandarin Emperor - *Citrus reticulata* var.. Large, very juicy, loose skinned fruit with a good flavour which ripens during May and June. The skin is almost red in colour and rough. Grows to around 4m.

Oranges

Orange Valencia - *Citrus sinensis* var.. Large, oblong, firm fruit with a good flavour and juicy. A seedless orange and fast growing. This variety crops regularly and the fruit which ripens from late summer can be held on the tree, making it sweeter than most.

Orange Washington Navel - *Citrus sinensis* var.. Large round seedless fruit are produced from May to September (Winter). This variety has very juicy fruit with an excellent flavour. It requires extra attention to set a good crop. They are more suited to colder climates but can be more prone to disease.

Tangelo

Tangelo - *Citrus paradisi x reticulata*. Tangelos are a cross between mandarins and grapefruits.

Double Grafted Citrus (splitters)

– matched for vigour and excellent space savers in a small garden.

Washington Navel and Meyer Lemon

Washington Navel and Tahitian Lime

Meyer Lemon and Tahitian Lime.

Dwarf Citrus - grafted onto a special understock called flying dragon. They grow to about half the size of the normal varieties.