



CITRUS PLANTS

The kind of citrus you grow depends upon your own desires. Each mature fruit of Ponderosa lemon weighs up to 2 1/2 pounds and yields enough juice to make half dozen pies. The Meyer lemon, on the other hand, has a fruit similar in size to that sold in markets. Both can be kept under 4 feet in height by pruning.

Another of the most popular for indoor culture is the Calamondin or Panama orange, *C. mitis*, which is widely available in flower shops across the country. Both this and the Otahaite orange, *C. taitensis*, are low growing and rarely exceed 2 feet in height. Both have deliciously fragrant white flowers and miniature tart fruits about an inch in diameter.

It is also possible to grow the sweet orange, *c. sinensis*, in the home, but the plants do not bear as freely when small, as do lemons and dwarf oranges. Tangerines and Satsuma oranges, forms of *C. reticulata*, are intermediate in size and do well indoors or in a greenhouse.

The lime, *C. aurantifolia* is also a low growing plant suitable for indoor culture. Like lemons, limes are yellow when mature, although the fruit is sold in markets while still green and highly acidic.

Some citrus hybrids are also suitable for growing indoors. The Temple orange, for instance, is a cross between a sweet orange and a tangerine and is especially satisfactory because of its compact growth.

Citrus relatives, the kumquats, are also good candidates for indoor and greenhouse culture. The dwarf kumquat, *Fortunella hindsii*, grows about 12 inches tall in pots, while the Nagami, or oval kumquat, *F. margarita*, reaches a height of two feet indoors. Both have delicious, thin-skinned golden orange fruit that ripens in the fall. The entire fruit, including the skin, is edible.

PROPAGATION:

The chance that seeds, even from a superior variety, will produce fruit, is somewhat remote. For that reason, citrus fruits are usually propagated from grafts on seeding plants or from cuttings.

TEMPERATURE:

Temperatures about 70 degrees F. are very favourable for citrus. The night temperatures should be cooler if possible, especially during the winter. A reading of 50-55 degrees F. is ideal. Citrus plants love humidity. Place pots on moist pebble trays or group together with other high-light plants.

LIGHT:

Trees grown indoors can never have full sun all day, but if they have four or more hours of direct sun, with bright light the rest of the day, they will do satisfactorily.

WATER:

Since citrus trees are broad-leaved evergreens whose foliage loves a great deal of moisture, especially in the dry atmosphere of a home, water deeply, wetting the entire soil ball thoroughly each time you apply water but allow the top of the soil to become nearly dry before giving each plant another watering.



POTTING:

Citrus do well in slightly acid (pH 6.0 to 6.5) soil mixture composed of three parts potting soil and one part peat moss. Repotting is best done in early spring, just as new growth begins. Pruning, if necessary, should be done at that time also, since cuts are soon hidden by new growth. It is not necessary to repot most citrus, especially the dwarfs such as calamondins and otaheite oranges, each year. Instead, take the plant from its pot and gently wash away some of the old soil and replace it with a fresh supply.

FEEDING:

A balanced fertilizer, such as 20-20-20 is best. Give them three light feedings each year; late winter or early spring, early summer and early autumn.

SPECIAL CARE:

Unless the plants are attacked by insects, the only care the leaves require is an occasional syringing with tepid water. Take advantage of this when the plants are outdoors and wash them with a garden hose.

Given the proper care and conditions, your citrus plant should produce blossom and fruit. To see these results in your home or garden will give you great satisfaction and pleasure.