



BENEFITS: Not only are they zesty, juicy and delicious; citrus fruits are rich in Vitamin C, folate and thiamin.

DESCRIPTION: Citrus plants have dark green, shiny leaves and are an attractive houseplant. Even if you can't get your citrus to fruit, the sweetly scented flowers and bruised leaves have an intoxicating perfume that will fill a room.

CARE: Citrus are best grown in containers as it keeps the trees dwarf and compact, and makes the plants easier to manage. Citrus prefer well-drained soils and prefer infrequent, deep watering as opposed to frequent shallow watering. If your citrus tree loses all of its leaves due to over or under watering, do not despair. If you resume the proper water requirements for citrus trees and keep the plant evenly watered, the leaves will regrow and the plant will come back to its former glory. In general, you should be doing your citrus fertilizing about once every 1-2 months during active growth (spring & summer) and once every 2 -3 months during the tree's dormant periods (fall & winter). Use a general all-purpose soluble fertilizer such as 10-10-10. Watch that you don't over fertilize as this can cause the plant to produce less fruit. Citrus plants need at least 5 hours of direct sun a day but 10-12 hours is ideal. Grow these plants outdoors during the summer.

POLLINATION: Most citrus trees are self-pollinating. Citrus trees can be grown year round indoors, however when you grow a citrus tree indoors, bees and other insects are unable to pollinate them. Therefore, you should place them outdoors during summer to increase your chances of bearing fruit, unless you want to complete this task yourself. Shake, flick, or brush with a cotton swab or small paintbrush gently to distribute the pollen from flower to flower and encourage fruiting. Additionally, moving the plant outdoors to a sunny, protected area will stimulate blooming. When pollination is a success, fruit will develop and take a few weeks –months to ripen. It is fairly common for smaller, young fruit to drop off shortly after formation due to ineffective pollination or less than desirous environmental conditions.

OVERWINTERING: In cold winter areas, bring citrus indoors when temperatures dip below 8°C. Slowly transition the trees to the indoor/outdoor environment in spring and fall by bringing them in and out for one week. This acclimates them and reduces stress on the plant. Place potted plants in a sunny south-facing window, reduce watering and consider placing a humidifier or other houseplants around to keep the humidity high during the dry months. Citrus trees go into an inactive growing stage over the winter but will maintain their foliage. Plants will thrive outdoors once chance of frost is past.

PRUNING: Prune off any new shoots that arise from below the graft union. These are rootstock shoots and won't grow into the desired citrus variety. Prune for shape and balance in spring, removing errant or leggy branches.

HARVESTING: Harvest the fruit with clippers or scissors to avoid damaging the stem. Fruit is best eaten soon after harvest or should be refrigerated immediately. The larger the fruit, the longer it takes to ripen. So, those small lemons and limes will ripen within a few months while the larger oranges and grapefruit can take up to twelve to eighteen months, depending on your climate.

