



FACEBOOK LIVE SEMINAR

Growing Citrus

Few things beat a freshly picked orange just off the tree. The fragrance of the citrus flowers can fill a room and the bright colors of the fruit with that glossy foliage make handsome additions to your home. Here are all the juicy details on growing and caring for citrus in Hampton Roads.

GROWING CITRUS

- Citrus plants like lemons, limes, oranges, and kumquats are some of the best edible fruits to grow inside.
- All citrus plants prefer zones 9-11. Some have been known to grow year-round in zone 8, but not very well. In Hampton Roads, we suggest growing citrus in containers, so they can be brought inside in winter and placed outside for a summer vacation.
- Citrus can withstand temps slightly below 40 degrees. It can take temperatures as low as 32 degrees, but only for a brief period (only a few hours) without acquiring damage.

LIGHTING

- Light plays a crucial role in how well your citrus plant will grow.
- Growing citrus indoors, year-round, requires a well-lit area, preferably near a south-facing window.
- A west-facing window with at least 8 hours of good sunlight per day may be adequate.
- Consider growing citrus indoors during the cooler months of the year (November through March).

CONTAINERS

- Citrus can be grown in most any type of planter or container, just be sure your pots/containers have drain holes to ensure proper drainage.
- Use a lightweight container if you plan on relocating your citrus from inside in winter to outside in summer.
- Use a decorative container to conceal the plastic growing pot.
- Terracotta, plastic, ceramic, foam or fiber clay are all good options for growing citrus.
- Keep a new plant in its original pot for a few weeks to give it ample time to acclimated to its new environment.
- When repotting citrus, be sure to gradually grade-up in size.
- Plants growing indoors do better when slightly root bound rather than having excess soil around their roots.
- Replant in spring or summer when roots are developing.

SOIL

- Always use a good quality potting soil when planting citrus in containers. Never use a compost, topsoil, or garden soil- all of which do not allow for good drainage.
- Citrus trees prefer a pH between 5.5-6.5.

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FEEDING YOUR CITRUS

- Citrus is actively growing throughout the year, so be sure to feed every 6-8 weeks.
- We recommend Greenleaf or Greenleaf organic, both of which contain beneficial trace elements.
- Espoma Citrus Tone and Happy Frog Citrus food are also good quality citrus formulation options.
- Citrus needs a healthy supply of iron, and while fertilizers contain iron, consider supplementing with chelated liquid iron with every season change (approximately every three months).
- Yellow leaves may indicate a lack of iron. Once leaves turn yellow, it's hard to get back to green, so be aware of leaf color and treat as necessary.
- Use 1-2 tablespoons iron per gallon.

WATERING

- Avoid a watering schedule. Be sure to water citrus as needed.
- Don't let plants completely dry out. Water when the top 2-3 inches of soil become dry.
- Citrus has different watering requirements at certain times of the year, so pay close attention to the soil.
- Citrus grown outdoors will require more frequent watering.
- Citrus grown indoors (in winter), needs to be watered every 3-4 weeks. Water every 1-2 weeks in summer.

- Outside watering requirements will be higher than those indoors due to natural elements like wind, higher temps, and evaporation.
- Indoors, let water sit for 24 hours.
- Humidity – citrus plants love humidity, but don't mist leaves. Use a humidity tray or a saucer with rock and fill with water, which will add humidity to the plant.

PRUNING

- The best time to prune is after a harvest, before new flowers emerge. If no flowers or fruit are present, you can prune anytime.
- Prune off suckers below graft points.
- Leaf loss is somewhat natural, especially when you change location. You may get leaf loss when you bring plants home, or when relocating them from outside to inside (and vice versa). Leaf loss can also indicate low humidity levels.

POLLINATION

- Most citrus is self-pollinating, but if they are blooming indoors, there are no insects to pollinate blooms on the same plant.
- A light shake helps move pollen from one flower to the next.
- For indoors plants, use a cotton swab or small paint brush to dab into each open flower to help aid in pollination.
- Outside, don't worry, nature will take care of it.

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OTHER TIPS

- Keep leaves clean and free of dust.
- Scale, mites, whitefly, leaf miners, mealybug, and aphids are the most common pest issues with citrus plants.
- Control pest with neem oil, spinosad soap or hort Oil, if needed.
- Citrus have very little fungus or disease issues.

VARIETIES

Kumquat Centennial Variegated - A sweet and tangy kumquat (not sour) with variegated foliage. When ripe, they turn orange. A prolific bloomer that can hold fruit for a long time.

Bearss Lemon- Fast growing and produce very few thorns compared to other lemon trees. The fruit is juicy with a sharp tartness. Often used in beverages, lemon desserts, and other dishes. Bearss Lemons are also known to have fewer seeds and more juice than other lemons of the same size.

Meyer Lemon – A cross between a lemon and a mandarin orange, Meyer lemon have a smooth, golden, edible skin, and a high volume of juice but none of the bitterness of a regular lemon. With a polished, golden skin and lush, glossy leaves, this plant pulls double duty by yielding fruit and looking great. It produces small, fragrant flowers year-round.

Ponderosa Lemon – A real conversation piece, the Ponderosa is a cross between lemon and citron with a sour taste.

Sometimes called the Five Pound Lemon, the Ponderosa produces a gigantic, bumpy-skinned lemon weighing 2-4 pounds! The flowers are intensely fragrant and produce lots of huge lemons. The juice from one Ponderosa is enough for several pies!

Mexican Lime (Key Lime) - Mexican lime is known by many names such as Key lime, Bartender's lime, and West Indian lime. The trees are moderately-sized and bushy, almost shrub-like, and the leaves are distinctively aromatic when crushed. Some selections are quite thorny, while other selections are thornless. Blossoms are pure white and fragrant. Fruits are small, approximately one and one-half inches in diameter, and almost round, with a thin, smooth, greenish-yellow rind at maturity. Once Mexican limes reach full maturity (usually in autumn to early winter), they drop from the tree. Mexican lime trees are sensitive to cold.

Persian Lime – A huge, lumpy lime with oval-shaped fruit, about the same size as a lemon, The vivid green peel turns yellow when ripe. It's typically seedless and has light-green to yellow pulp that is tender and acidic. This lime has stronger resistance to cold compared to other lime trees. The gold-standard lime for cocktail drinks and Mexican food, the Persain lime is said to be the most popular lime in the world!

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