



GROWING CITRUS IN CANBERRA

Citrus are very rewarding plants for the Canberra garden. They are handsome evergreens with very fragrant blooms and such useful, ornamental fruit.

WHAT DO CITRUS PLANTS LIKE?

Citrus varieties originate in parts of the world that have much warmer winters than Canberra and higher annual rainfall. Citrus will be happiest when you can give them 3 main things:

- **Warmth and sun.** Provide as much as you can. Plant them near a wall that stores heat on winter days and radiates it back at night, reducing the impact of frost. A north facing masonry wall is ideal; courtyards and nearby paving can help too. Or grow citrus in a large pot that can snuggle under the eaves of your house in winter.
- **Lots of fertiliser.** Citrus plants get very hungry producing all that fruit, so feed them generously. Timing is important so that the tender new growth that follows soon after feeding doesn't get burnt by late or early frosts. Feed regularly at the outer root zone between October and March but do not feed in the cold months, even if the plant looks yellow, which often happens in cold climates. We recommend *Healthy Earth* fertilisers.
- **Lots of water and good drainage.** Citrus need a lot of water to grow and set fruit successfully, but they don't like "wet feet", so make sure the soil includes plenty of moisture-holding compost and has free drainage. If your garden has drainage problems, raised beds or large containers will work well. Mulch will help with moisture too, because citrus is surface rooted, but do make sure you keep it well away from the stem.

ARE CITRUS GOOD FOR POTS?

Large pots can be a great idea for growing citrus, especially varieties that might need moving into shelter in winter. Special 'Dwarf' varieties are tailor made, but full-size varieties will work just as well if they are trimmed to size regularly (a pot will tend to keep the plant small anyway).

Make sure you use a high-quality potting mix and choose a pot shape that won't topple over easily in a strong wind gust.

WHAT KINDS ARE GOOD FOR CANBERRA?

Varieties with tangy or sour fruit are usually the most successful in our climate - Lemons, Kumquats, Calamondins (aka Green Kumquats), Native Citrus/Finger Limes, Limes, Grapefruits. The Kaffir or Makrut Lime needs more frost protection. Oranges, Blood Oranges and Mandarins can also fruit well but may not have quite the flavour achieved in more favourable climates.

PLANTING AND ESTABLISHMENT

For how to plant citrus, see our leaflet "*Planting Your New Tree*".

It's tempting to get fruit as soon as possible, but it is better if your new tree is allowed to "grow up" and establish itself before it fruits - so remove baby fruit in the first year or two.

Heavy frost may burn the top leaves, especially when the tree is young and small. Leave them until spring to trim off, because they will help protect lower leaves.