



## **TIPS FOR GROWING CITRUS**

### **Lemons/Oranges/Limes/Grapefruit**

#### **Position/Growing Conditions**

The secret to growing citrus trees is to aim for a constant regime as they resent extremes. An open free draining compost and a terracotta pot are important.

In winter they can be grown in either a cool or warm regime.

With cool growing conditions plants need to be acclimatized to the cold conditions and kept frost-free. An ideal nighttime temperature of between 5 & 10C (40-50F). Good light is essential so a sunroom or conservatory is ideal. They should be kept as dry as possible without wilting, this avoids root rots.

If you keep your citrus in a warm environment all winter, then an 80-90% humidity is required. Avoid hot dry air and draughts, (this is often the cause of leaf fall, plants do recover). To maintain humidity stand your plants on a saucer filled with gravel with the water level just below the gravel surface. Occasional misting over the leaves with rainwater will also help.

In summer they are much happier outside when all chance of frost is gone.

#### **Watering**

Citrus prefer soft water, so use rainwater when possible.

Water when the surface of the compost has started to dry out but wilting has not started. Give them a good soak then do not water again until they are dry. Water regularly in summer and very sparingly in winter.

#### **Compost & Feeding**

A soil-based compost is the norm for home gardeners. Use a John Innes potting compost no.3 with 25% extra grit added to keep the compost open and free draining. Alternatively, use a specific Citrus compost. The ideal pH for citrus is around 6-6.5 (neutral).

Plants that do require re-potting should be potted up a size in spring. Do not over pot them, as they do not have a vigorous root system, just 1-2 inches bigger than the root ball.

Those plants that are not re-potted can be top dressed with new compost including a slow or controlled release fertilizer. Osmocote granules can be incorporated into the potting compost and gives 6 months of fertilizer release. Should the plant show any signs of nutrient deficiency then a top up liquid feed is recommended.

Use a specific Citrus feed such as Maxicrop Citrus fertiliser. These contain a balanced ratio of all the elements essential for good plant health and growth.

### **Pruning**

Citrus do not require very much in the way of pruning. When pruning is required this is mostly carried out during the summer. It would consist of trimming back straggly and strong growing shoots to maintain shape and to avoid over crowding. This allows for good air movement aiding healthy plant growth.

Suckering can occur and tearing from the root rather than cutting them off should be practised to avoid additional suckering.

### **Pest and Disease**

#### **Pests**

Citrus plants can be attacked by: aphids, red spider mites, mealy bug and scale insects.

**Aphids** can be controlled easily with an insecticide containing rape seed oil or a soap based insecticide.

**Red Spider Mite, Mealy Bug and Scale insects** are not so easy to control and should be treated early with either (but not both), an insecticide or biological controls from Just Green.

**Ask in store for our recommended products.**

**Red Spider Mite** can be deterred by keeping humidity high.

#### **Diseases**

Very few diseases attack citrus plants.

**Sooty Mould** can develop on the leaves and is an indicator of the presence of scale or aphid on the leaves above. To control eliminate the pest and wipe the mould off with moist cotton wool.

*Pesticides, always read the label and use with care.*