



# Citrus

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### Citrus sp.

Citrus are the most popular fruit-bearing trees grown in Australian gardens. Glossy green foliage, white flowers and colourful, great tasting fruit make these trees ornamental as well as productive. Citrus are tropical/subtropical plants that are hardy and easy to grow, with some varieties capable of growing in areas that experience cold winters. With proper care, Citrus will provide an abundance of fruit that can be left on the tree for long periods.

### How to grow:

The best time to plant Citrus is in the spring and autumn. When it comes to planting, select the site carefully, keeping in mind all sun and frost protection requirements. Citrus love sunshine! They prefer an open, warm, sunny position, receiving full sun for about 4-6 hours or more per day. Though some Citrus varieties will tolerate light frost, a position protected from frost is advisable as it can damage young blossom-bearing shoots.

If frost is expected, use a frost cover if possible. Shelter from strong, cold winds is important as such conditions can damage young growth, blossoms and developing fruit. Lawn and Citrus don't mix! Do not under-plant citrus with lawn or plants.

Good drainage is vital for Citrus as they are susceptible to root rot. A deep, friable, rich soil needs to be prepared before planting. If you have heavy clay soil, you'll need to dig in plenty of gypsum to improve drainage, adding in some compost for the benefits of organic matter. Avoid planting in low-lying areas that retain run-off in the winter months.

Don't have the room for a large tree? Dwarf Citrus varieties are available, or you could grow your tree in a pot and keep it pruned down to a manageable size. You'll need a large pot such as a half wine barrel (or a pot of similar size) and good quality potting mix.

Citrus are not deep-rooted trees. Regular watering is required during the hot summer months, while taking care not to over-water. Soaking the soil once or twice a week instead of light daily watering is beneficial for Citrus when the weather is warm.

As the weather cools down it's important to back off on the watering, as Citrus don't like to have their roots sitting in water for long periods of time. Too much water will cause leaves to turn yellow and drop.



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Only mulch in late spring or summer to conserve moisture. Care must be taken not to build up mulch around the trunk of your tree as this may cause collar rot. It is advisable to remove mulch from around your tree over the winter months to let the soil dry out and to let the sun warm the soil.

Citrus trees need fertilisers that contain essential nutrients for healthy foliage and full, juicy fruit. The best time to fertilise your Citrus is during spring and summer, but it can be done at any time. It is recommended to use a complete fruit and Citrus fertiliser periodically, as nutrient deficiencies are common.

Keep an eye out for yellow leaves with green veins, yellow leaves with green in the centre and leaves that are turning pale all over, as these are typical representations of nutrient deficiency. Take note that yellowing foliage can also be related to cold weather and over-watering. Pelletised organic fertilisers and blood and bone are also great for your tree.

Spread the fertiliser away from the trunk, covering the area around the drip line (where the foliage ends). Never apply more than is recommended by the application instructions on the packaging. In general, Citrus require little pruning.

They will naturally grow into bushy trees; however, the tree will be healthier, easier to manage and produce more reliable crops if pruned. Always prune out any dead, damaged or diseased branches. Citrus will tolerate a heavy cut back if required. Late winter or early spring is the best time to prune, after harvest but before new growth begins.

You can espalier your Citrus to provide an evergreen screen or feature plant. Espalier pruning is to grow your plant flat against a trellis, wall or fence.

Citrus trees are susceptible to some pest and disease problems. Keep an eye out for aphids, scale and mealybugs which are sap-sucking insects that can be controlled with horticultural oil (see our 'Pests and Diseases' page for more information).

Ants running up and down Citrus trees are an indication of aphids, scale and mealybugs, as ants feed from the sticky substance they create known as honeydew. Sooty mould is another indication, which is a black fungus that looks just like soot which grows on the honeydew.

A Citrus gall wasp infestation is noticeable as unsightly galls that gradually increase in size. This will weaken the tree and can eventually cause death, particularly in young trees.

Branches with developing galls need to be removed by pruning below the gall, as the wasp will emerge from the swelling and lay eggs in other branches. See our 'Pests and Diseases' page for more information.