



INDOOR  
PLANTS  
GARDENING  
SERIES



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# Dwarf Citrus

## INDOOR/OUTDOOR TREES

Trees can be kept on patios and decks in warm weather. Move inside for winter to avoid freezing. Adjust watering as needed.

Place the tree in partial shade for a couple of weeks to transition from full sun to indoors. Repeat process after danger of frost is past. If a grow light is used indoors, the transition in shade is not necessary.

## YOUR DWARF CITRUS OUTDOORS

A sunny, frost-free, wind-free, southern exposure is best. Warm microclimates (created by reflected heat from houses or walkways, porches) can provide some heat for frost protection in spring and fall.

## WATER

Citrus don't like wet feet. Light, well-drained soil will allow the soil to be moist but not soggy. How often to water will vary with soil porosity, size of tree, and temperature. A simple "moisture meter", available at garden supply stores, will read moisture at a deeper level than your finger.

- A wilted tree means too little water
- A tree with yellow leaves or folded leaves can indicate too much water

## FERTILIZING

Since citrus trees are heavy nitrogen feeders, make sure there is more nitrogen (N) than phosphorous (P) or potassium (K), at least a 2-1-1 ratio. Miracid Soil Acidifier (30-10-10) is a water soluble product that works well and is a 3-1-1 ratio.

Also important are trace minerals like iron, zinc, and manganese so make sure those are included as well. Granular slow release fertilizers are a good choice. Follow rates on the packaging carefully as fertilizers come in different strengths and release rates. Foliar applications of trace minerals in the form of kelp or other soluble fertilizers are effective on maturing leaves. Yellowing leaves indicate lack of fertilizer or poor drainage.

## SUCKERING

Know where the graft is on your tree. It can usually be seen as a diagonal scar between 4" and 8" from the soil. Remove all shoot growth below the graft. These "suckers" take vitality from the top of the tree (the fruiting wood). Especially on young trees, they are very vigorous.

## PRUNING

Citrus may be pruned to any desired shape. Pruning is fine any time of the year, except in winter for trees outdoors. Pinching back tips of new growth is the best way to round out the trees without impacting future fruit.

Citrus will look fuller with occasional pruning to shape leggy branches. Very leggy branches indicate the need for more light.

Some trees may develop erratic juvenile growth above the graft. If so, prune for shape and balance. Any growth above the graft can eventually bear fruit.

## POLLINATION

Citrus are self-pollinating, even indoors.

Citrus originated in temperate or tropical climates in Asia. Outdoors in warm weather or in greenhouses or solariums, those conditions are easily duplicated.

Homes can provide a suitable environment, when a few parameters are met:

## LIGHT

Citrus like 8-12 hours of sunlight a day. Grow lights are a good supplement indoors to maximize growth and fruit production. Light is a key element for flower production in the spring. Winter foliage will tolerate slightly lower light conditions.

## **SOIL AND CONTAINER**

Use a light, well-drained commercial soil mix. Be sure the pot has adequate drainage holes as well. Do not put gravel in the bottom of the pot. Place pot on a tray of pebbles or other surface that will allow air and water flow. Use a container that is light and easy to move around. Repotting with fresh soil mix every 1-2 years will provide fresh nutrients to the roots.

## **WATER**

Water as needed to keep soil moist, not soggy. Generally every 7 days indoors is adequate. Do not leave container in standing water.

## **HUMIDITY**

In winter months, heated rooms may need additional humidity. Misting, trays of pebbles or humidifiers will help keep the leaves lush and healthy.

## **INSECT PESTS**

Outdoors, not all bugs are bad! Spiders, lady beetles, lacewings, and preying mantis are some of the beneficial insects you may see around citrus trees outdoors. Tiny wasps parasitize pests.

Keep your tree free of ants. They will "farm" scale or aphids, moving them from place to place, milking their sweet secretions, and protecting them from beneficial insects. Ant stakes may be helpful.

If you find harmful insects; like scale, aphid, or mites, a household spray bottle with mild dish soap could be all you need.

\*If insects persist, the usual nursery treatment is a 1% solution of Horticultural Oil.

\*Safer makes an aerosol product with Safer Soap and Pyrellin, a chrysanthemum derivative.

\*Oils and soaps are available in nurseries or garden centers or online at [groworganic.com](http://groworganic.com)

\*Do not use systemic insecticides on Citrus as they can travel through the plant and into the fruit.

With any treatment you use, spray the underside of the leaves as well. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations. Do not use stronger solutions. Repeat as needed to contact insect newly emerging from eggs.

Check out [ipm.udavis.edu](http://ipm.udavis.edu) for more on garden pests and beneficials.