

# Growing Citrus

Many types of citrus trees adapt to container growing in the Puget Sound area, which makes it easier to move them indoors during winter.

A favorite is the **Meyer Lemon** which is a sweet, easy-to-peel cross between a lemon and orange. The flower scent is heavenly and the fruit ripen November to January. (They are self-fertile.)

The following factors are most the most important to consider when growing citrus in containers:

**Light and Temperature:** Citrus need as much light and air circulation as possible. Containers can be transitioned outdoors in late spring/early summer, then back inside in fall when temperatures drop into the 40s. Indoors, the plants should be kept in a warm (above 55 degrees) greenhouse or sunny window. The fruit (on most varieties) will begin to ripen as you bring the trees indoors. Within a couple months, the trees will bloom again as they're moved back outside for spring.

**Soil:** Citrus trees require a well-draining organic potting soil. The optimum pH is 6.5. Citrus should be re-potted every 2 years if/when the plant becomes pot-bound.

**Water:** Citrus prefer infrequent, deep watering to frequent, shallow sprinklings. Water thoroughly but then allow to dry out almost completely before re-watering, especially during their winter resting period.

**Fertilizer:** Citrus are hungry plants especially when they are leafing out. They require ample food, particularly the micronutrients supplied through monthly feeding with an organic fertilizer. During the warmer months, a slow release organic fertilizer will encourage new growth and promote fruiting. They should also be fed (but not so frequently) in the winter.

**Pests:** Like other plants, citrus may be attacked by pests. Red spider mite, scale, and white fly are the main culprits. Horticultural oil spray is effective in ridding citrus of scale and mites; soap sprays can be used on aphids and mealybugs. Remember to inspect and treat for bugs before you bring them back indoors during the winter.