

Successful Citrus

EXPOSURE: Citrus require sun and warmth to thrive. Provide a site that has at least 6 hours of sun and is relatively wind free. A southern exposure is best. In cooler areas, consider the heat reflected by the house, walls, and walkways to provide frost protection or as a stimulus for summer growth.

PLANTING: Good drainage is key. Avoid planting in a lawn or in an area that gets frequent, shallow irrigation. Locate the graft on your tree. It will be seen as a slight bump on the lower trunk. Position the plant so that the graft union is facing away from the afternoon sun. Amend your garden soil with Sloat Planting Mix at a 50/50 ratio. Incorporate EB Stone Organics Sure Start and Greenall FST into the backfill soil. Greenall FST provides the slightly acidic environment citrus require as well as necessary iron, sulfur, manganese and zinc. Plant the rootball high so that it will be slightly above grade. It is okay if the top-most roots are visible. If you are planting in a container, use a well-drained mix such as Sloat Organic Potting Soil. Incorporate Greenall FST and EB Stone Organics Sure Start at planting. Water new plantings thoroughly.

FEEDING: Citrus are heavy feeders. They prefer a balanced fertilizer with a nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium ratio of 3-1-1. We recommend Greenall Citrus and Avocado Food or EB Stone Organics Citrus Food + Liquinox Iron & Zinc. Additional supplements are needed in spring and fall to provide necessary micronutrients. You can use either Greenall FST (dry) or Gromore Citrus Growers Blend (liquid). Container-grown citrus prefer Maxsea Acid food. Citrus should be fed year-round, even in winter.

WATERING: A good schedule to start with is to water deeply once a week, more or less, depending on climate conditions. In a cool spring with intermittent rain, you would water less. During a hotter June or July, you may have to water once or even twice a week, especially if your tree is in a container. Signs of overwatering are yellowing leaves and downward cupped leaves. Even if the top of the soil is dry, there may be adequate moisture in the root zone. Citrus prefer soil that stays between dry and moist. Using a moisture meter can be helpful to determine when you need to water.

While Citrus are generally easy to care for if fed regularly, there can be some challenges down the road. Here are some solutions to the most common issues.

Fruit Drop: Some fruit drop is normal, especially in the "green pea" (very small) stage. Very hot, dry, windy weather will trigger fruit drop. Be sure trees are well-watered in this situation. Excessive fruit drop, especially when it is larger and shows splitting is caused by too much water.

Suckering: Any growth that arises from below the graft should be removed. Allowing it to remain will sap the energy of the fruit bearing, upper canopy. These branches are usually thorny and very upright in habit.

Snails: Snails can chew holes in foliage. They can especially be a problem when the juveniles take cover in the crown of the tree. Apply Sluggo around the base of the tree in late winter/ early spring if snails are a nuisance in your garden. Sluggo Plus can be used if there is also an ant problem.

Scale Insect: Scale appear as hard, brown bumps on the branchlets. They are most often detected by the presence of ants which farm them or by a wilted appearance. The trunk of the tree can be wrapped with Tangle Guard and coated with Tanglefoot to stop the ants. Scale can be eradicated by spraying with Bonide All Seasons Oil at 7-10 day intervals. Always water prior to spraying.



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