

# Citrus Trees

**LARRY'S ORCHIDS & TROPICALS** sells two different kinds of citrus. Grafted and/or Dwarf/Patio. These instructions will be used for both types of trees, except where noted. If you do not know which tree type you have, please read the product description. Remember if you are planning on putting your tree outside for the summer, or just after you receive it, you will have to 'harden it off', allowing it to get use to the heat and strong sunlight again.

**REPOTTING of GRAFTED TREES:** If your tree is GRAFTED, it has arrived growing in an 8-inch grow tube. Let it rest from shipping for a few days and then pot following the directions below. Keep watering it and give it light in the interim but do not let it stand in water while still in the tube. To remove from grow tube soak in water for 10 minutes, mush the tube a few times and gently pull root plug from tube. You can plant the root plug as deep as you want as long as the graft union (grafted bud) with growth above it, isn't covered by soil, if necessary you can cut up to a third of the bottom off the root plug to get it to fit into your pot. The rootstock portion of the plug (lower part with the roots on it) will eventually be the trunk so you set the trunk length at planting time. The scion is the branch coming off to the side at the top with the leaves on it. That is the part that has been grafted on to the rootstock and this scion will become the branches of the tree with the flowers and fruit. Start with a one/two gallon pot and increase in pot size later if you wish. We have removed the leaves trying to grow on the rootstock as you should also as they try to form. We recommend *Miracle Gro Cactus Palm and Citrus soil* available at Lowes or Home Depot (or any other major nursery center).

**REPOTTING of DWARF / PATIO TREES (rooted cuttings):** If your tree is the DWARF variety, it has arrived on a 2.5 inch pot. Repotting will need to take place when the trees roots are starting to come out of the drainage holes. Repot your tree into a one gallon pot. Place the trees trunk at the same level it was in the pot it was shipped in. You may need to stake your tree so that it grows straight.

**BLOOMING and FRUITING** can be expected within the first year, however we recommend that you shape your tree by pruning to form a nice rounded tree, and then allow the blooming process to repeat. This procedure gives you more bearing branches and therefore, more fruit in the long run.

**SOIL MEDIA** for citrus needs to be well drained and at least 35% air flow porosity. A typical perennial mix should work well. Citrus do not like their "wet feet," so be careful to not over water. We recommend *Miracle Gro Cactus, Palm and Citrus Potting Mix*. Again available in our Online Web Page Store or larger local garden centers such as Lowe's or Home Depot.

**POT SIZE** can be anything up to 5 gallons WITH GOOD DRAINAGE. The smaller the pot, the quicker the tree will make a finished size. It takes 12-18 months for the foliage to fill into a 5-gallon pot under good growing conditions.

**TEMPERATURE** can vary widely for citrus, but it is important to stay above freezing. Soil temperature over 55° will keep the trees from going dormant, but 75° should keep them growing if there's enough light. 85°-95° is optimum soil temperature and you can let the air temperature get up to 110° as long as the humidity level is high enough. High heat and dry air could cause leaves to sunburn.

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**CITRUS IS VERY APICALLY DOMINANT** which is an advantage if you want a tall tree, but it can hinder making bushy trees. Pinching is required to force side branching and can be done when a new shoot has 4-5 expanded leaves. If only one shoot develops after pinching, it will suppress additional shoot development, but normally 2-4 side shoots will develop below where the branch was cut. Lemon and Lime varieties are especially difficult to make into bushes, but careful attention as they develop will yield success.

**FERTILIZER** recommended is GROW MORE© Citrus Growers Blend, a water-soluble fertilizer. This fertilizer should be used on your tree approximately every two weeks, and mixed according to the manufacturer's recommendation of one teaspoon per half gallon of water. Available in our Online Store in 10 oz and 1.5 lb jars.

**FROST** is a concern for all citrus varieties. Lemons, Limes and Citrons are the most frost sensitive while Mandarins and Kumquats can handle temperatures in the low 20's. The best plan is to pot the Citrus and grow on the patio/deck for the warm months and roll indoors next to the door wall for the colder months.

**DAY LENGTH** does affect citrus tree growth. Shorter days will stop the trees from growing actively since citrus needs over 11 hours of light to stay active and get any growth. Artificial light for photosynthesis is not necessary in January and February but will be just enough to confuse the trees and keep them from going completely dormant. This allows them to wake up faster when the days get longer in February and March.

**SUNLIGHT** is important to citrus. Citrus only require 70% sunlight for maximum photosynthesis, but it doesn't grow at optimum during grey cloudy days.

**HUMIDITY** helps citrus grow better. The more humid it is the happier the trees will be since they like tropical climates. You may find some algae growth on the leaves when the humidity is high, but that won't hurt much unless it is inhibiting photosynthesis. In California's dry summer climate, they'll grow fine as is evident by the commercial citrus grown in desert areas, but if you're trying for optimum, keep the humidity high.

**WATERING** can be done by hand, drip irrigation, spray stake, under canopy sprinklers, or even overhead. Citrus leaves do often prevent uniform overhead watering, so just make sure the tree gets what is needed. It is easy to over water citrus, so error on the dry side. Make sure your watering goes to the bottom of the pot.

**SUCKERING** is necessary if shoots develop below the bud union. These suckers come from the rootstock and won't help you make the tree you desire. Be sure to take them off before they get to the point where you need pruning shears! Shoots that develop at the bud union often help create a bushy effect if that is what you desire. Just let those new shoots develop. It's okay to have multiple branches from the bud since the trunk will be the rootstock.

Citrus takes **PRUNING** pretty well, but remember it is very apically dominant as mentioned above. If you're shaping the tree after it has developed large branches, remember that wherever you make a cut, 2-3 shoots will develop right by the cut. Severe pruning of a tree that is out-of balance may be the best solution in the long run.