



**Aylett Nurseries**  
*The Complete Garden Centre*

# Citrus Cultivation

**Information Leaflet No. 63**



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**Citrus plants can be grown in this country, but in our experience customers do not find them as easy as many books and television programmes suggest. They are not suitable for growing in a living room of the house. They need to be grown in a sheltered site outdoors and brought inside for the winter, or grown in a cool conservatory.**

Most are grown in pots in bush form or as standards, but may also be fan-trained against a wall when grown in a greenhouse border.

### **Commonly available Citrus**

Citrus mitris	= Calamondin
Citrus limonia	= lemon
Citrus japonica	= kumquat
Citrus sinensis	= orange



### **COMPOST**

Grow citrus plants in a soil-based compost such as John Innes potting compost number 2 or a 50/50 mix of peat based compost / John Innes Ericaceous, then add grit and bark for good drainage. Repot only during the late winter or early spring before new growth begins, as they dislike root disturbance. Plants in smaller pots may need repotting every 2 or 3 years but plants in 60cm - 1.2m (2-4ft) or larger containers will need less frequent repotting. In years when not repotted the top 5cm (2in) of old compost should be removed in April and replaced with fresh compost and a fertiliser such as Vitax Q4.

### **TEMPERATURE**

Generally, citrus prefer a period of cool conditions in winter, so that very little growth takes place. Lemon prefers a minimum winter day temperature of 10 degrees C (50°F) and the calamondin orange 13 degrees C (55°F) minimum winter day temperature. Other species will tolerate lower, but frost-free temperatures, preferably with winter night temperatures not falling below 7 degrees C (45°F).

### **LIGHT**

Citrus need very good light conditions at all times. They are best cultivated in a light conservatory during the winter. During the summer, light shading is advisable either indoors or out to prevent the young foliage from scorching.

### **WATER AND HUMIDITY**

In winter, water moderately allowing the surface to partially dry out before watering, then water thoroughly, allowing excess moisture to drain away. In summer, water freely and do not allow the base of the pot to stand in water.

Citrus are not suitable as indoor plants and are best grown in the buoyant atmosphere of greenhouse or conservatory. Stand on a large saucer or tray filled with 'Hydroleuca' or gravel, with the water level maintained just below the surface of the gravel. Mist the leaves in early morning in the summer and ventilate so that a good circulation of fresh air is maintained. Citrus plants can be placed outdoors in summer, from mid June to late September, if sheltered from cold winds.

## FEEDING

Citrus are heavy feeders. We recommend Global Orange Groves Summer Food, changing to Winter formula when the clocks change. In areas with hard water, leaves may show signs of yellowing, where this occurs, occasional feeds with sequestered iron ( e.g. Sequesterene ) or Maxicrop 'Extract of Seaweed' will be beneficial, plus Sequesteron Iron.

## PRUNING

If plants become rather leggy, prune back by up to two thirds after re-potting, or in early spring. The leader may also be cut back to induce bushier growth. Occasionally, mature plants may produce a number of fast growing and unwanted shoots. These 'water shoots' grow from the upper sides of young laterals (particularly in lemons) and grow parallel with the main stem. They can crowd the centre of the plant and make it too tall. Cut all such shoots out from around the main branch and shorten shoots arising near the tip of branches.

## REPOTTING

Repotting is best performed during Spring (April-June), always going up to the next size pot to the existing one. Never over-pot by putting in too large a size. Citrus dislike too much lime, preferring a neutral soil. Either John Innes Ericaceous, or a 50/50 mix of peat based compost / John Innes Ericaceous would be suitable. Then add grit and bark for drainage. Try not to disturb the roots when planting, but firm the compost around the root ball. Do not feed for the first 5 or 6 weeks after repotting.

## FLOWERING AND FRUITING

Fragrant white flowers form in the leaf axils on new growths made the previous summer, in late winter and early spring. Warm temperatures, high humidity and good general care will increase the chances of flowering. Under favourable conditions, lemon will flower continuously throughout the year, and can produce several crops each year. Flowers are bisexual, and need no artificial pollinating. If the conditions for growth are suitable, fruiting should occur after flowering. Ripening of the fruit will be achieved by a period of warm sunny weather.

## PESTS AND DISEASES

The main pests of Citrus are:

Red Spider Mites - Their presence can be detected by yellowing leaves, fine webbing between leaves and fine mottling of leaves.

Scale Insects - Seen as brown 'scales' on stems and leaves, when removed they contain white powdery eggs inside the hard shell.

Greenfly and Blackfly - Attack the young leaves and stems.

All these pests can be controlled by the application of Insecticides, where recommended on the side of the packet.

Sooty Mould - This is a secondary infection caused by mould growing on the sugary secretions of Scale Insects or Greenfly. It is best removed by gentle washing with soapy water.

**This leaflet is available in  
alternative formats.**

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