

Flowers & Fruit

Generally flowering takes place in May but may occur several times in the year with fruit setting each time. An enormous number of fragrant flowers appear but only about 1% will set on the large trees (more than this would overload the branches when the fruit reaches full size). Calamondin's and Kumquats set a higher percentage of fruit and may even have to be thinned to avoid weighing the branches down too much.

The fruit gradually develops and turns colour around Christmas time. (The colder weather tends to act as a trigger for colouring.) It will then stay on a tree for several months after ripening. Valencia Late Orange trees are noted particularly for holding the ripe fruit on the branches for 8-10 months with no loss of flavour.

Calamondin fruit also stays on the tree for many months. These are rather sour for eating but very good for marmalade. Of the other miniature trees, the Kumquats can be eaten together with their skin once they are fully orange and limequats have the flavour of full-sized limes.

Pruning

To keep the trees in shape, pinch out the growing tip once a branch reaches its desired length. Regular cutting back of any branches that are too long will encourage bushy growth nearer the middle of the tree and this can be carried out at any time of



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Citrus Care



Our large citrus trees come mainly from Portugal, Italy and France.

Light

They can readily cope with our outdoor and glasshouse light levels, but should be given a high level of light indoors (either through windows or artificial lighting) being careful not to allow leaf burn in direct summer sun through glass.

When there is no danger of frost, all citrus trees like to be outside in the summer months. However, they must be acclimatised gradually to the new light level by being moved first to a slightly shaded area outside for 2 to 3 weeks before being put in their sheltered, sunny spot for the summer. Equally, when being brought indoors in winter, they should be kept in the shade for 2 to 3 weeks before coming inside. This reduces any stress to the leaves that the sudden light change could cause.

Temperature

Citrus trees can tolerate temperatures down to 4°C (even 2°C for short periods), but they must not be frosted. They are also tolerant of high temperatures, but prefer to be at neither extreme for too long. Owners are often unaware of just how hot their conservatory can become on sunny days and of the stress it can cause to their planted trees.

Feeding

During the growing months, the trees should be fed every 2 weeks with Orange Grove Citrus Feed, summer or winter formula and given the occasional dose of sequestered iron (and, if possible, trace elements) if any yellowing of the leaves occurs.

Pests

The most likely pests are scale insect and red spider mite. These can be easily controlled with an appropriate off-the-shelf spray. As the dead scale insect can harbour viable eggs under it, any scales are best removed by rubbing or scraping gently with a finger nail. A systemic insecticide can be used to a very good effect but should be used with caution when there is any intention of eating the fruit within a few weeks.

Water

Water sparingly in winter without letting the pot dry out completely, and increase the amount of water once growth starts in the spring. In a hot conservatory the trees will dry out more quickly and may need watering as often as once a day in sunny weather. The larger pots take a lot of water so enough must be given to reach the lower part of the pot.

Humidity

In hot weather and in central heating, humidity can drop dramatically. If the leaves show signs of stress, the humidity can be raised by a fine spray or standing pots on a tray of wet gravel. Increased humidity will also discourage any red spider mite attack.

Leaves

Citrus trees are evergreen and will naturally drop an old leaf from time to time. If however, there is a lot of leaf drop, then the first thing to look at is whether the tree is too dry, as this is generally the problem. The second most common reason is poor light, so moving the tree to a lighter position may solve the problem.

Do not be discouraged if a mistake has been made and the leaves drop, the tree will most likely grow a new crop of beautiful glossy leaves in a month or two and flowers soon after.

Pollination

Once the trees are outside for the summer, pollination will be carried out by insects. Inside pollination can be helped by transferring pollen from one flower to another with a small paintbrush or cotton bud.