

Growing great citrus

Citrus are particularly rewarding to grow with their combination of great looks and production of useful delicious fruit. There is nothing like your own fresh lemons!

The climate of the Inverell district is quite close to the cold limits of citrus. You need to choose a position for your citrus where there is some shelter from the cold if you live in a particularly cold area of this district. Some people grow their citrus in pots and move to sheltered spot for the winter.

Chose your spot and dig a hole at least twice the size of the root ball. Enrich the backfill soil with compost then place the enriched soil under and around your new tree. If you are planting into heavy black soil your tree will thank you if you build a mound to plant into rather than digging into the black soil. Leave a well around the trunk to enable water to penetrate better. Place mulch around the base of the plant (not touching the trunk) to help maintain moisture levels.

Citrus are in the Gross Feeders category of plants, along with roses, gardenia & hibiscus (to name a few). This means they need feeding regularly and often. We recommend the use of Searles Kickalong Fruit & Flower for your citrus. This fertilizer is organic and contains a higher ratio of Potash to help the plants flower well and develop strong healthy fruit. The analysis is N 4.4%: P 3%: K 6.6% plus all the trace elements including Magnesium which citrus can sometimes lack. We recommend you feed your citrus trees 4 times per year – at the change of each season is a good way to keep track of it.

Citrus like even regular watering. Cycles of drying out and rewetting can cause the fruit to split open as they grow and can also result in dry fruit. A good deep watering once a week is of more benefit than and quick hand water every day.

There are a few bugs that bother the citrus trees – The crusader beetle - a rather large dark shield beetle, caterpillars and leaf miners. **Shield beetles** are sap suckers and will damage young shoots and small branches – they can be removed by hand if you like but be very careful – they squirt a substance that will burn your skin and eyes. Wear protective clothing and glasses. You can use Conguard for the beetles if you prefer. The **caterpillars** of the Small Citrus Butterfly and the Large Citrus Butterfly find citrus particularly attractive and you need to just keep an eye out for these and again, wear gloves and remove by hand. **Citrus leaf miner** causes little squiggly tunnels in the leaf surface. Pest Oil is generally enough to clean this bug up. If you notice swollen sections on the stem of your citrus it could be **Citrus Gall wasp** who lay their eggs in spring in soft branches and cause the branch to swell. You need to remove the galls as growth beyond these is usually retarded by the gall.

In spite of all this, Citrus really are pretty easy to care for and if even you just feed & water you should be rewarded with great fruit.

BEST Tree Tenders Nursery
Lot 1 Warialda Rd
Inverell NSW 2360

P: 0267 224200
F: 0267 211164
E: sales@treetenders.com.au