



Thank you very much for purchasing a tree from Brite Leaf. Growing citrus isn't the easiest endeavor. However, we have listed a few things below that should help you be successful with your new tree. Keep in mind that citrus cannot just be planted and left to grow. It does require a fair amount of care.

WARNING: Trees should be kept out of direct sunlight until planted. If pot is left lying on side in the sun, it will "bake" the roots normally resulting in death of the tree. Remove plastic bag as soon as you get out of the box.

During the growing process, we periodically prune the trees to shape them and maintain their size on the bench. This does not harm the tree in any way, but its' top isn't quite as pretty. If your tree has been recently pruned, the new growth will start shortly and it will help the tree develop more branches. We appreciate your understanding this important aspect of the growing process.

Planting in Ground

1. Choose your planting site. Trees should be planted 15 feet apart and 15 feet (dwarfs 8 feet) away from house or other large trees. Citrus trees do not like standing water. They prefer sandy soils. A site that receives full sun works best, but at least 50% sun is needed. Planting on the southern side of a house, lake or other structure that offers wind protection will help protect your tree from cold.
2. Clear away weeds and grass. Dig a hole 8 - 10 inches larger than the root ball of the tree.
3. **IMPORTANT:** Fill hole with water.
4. Remove tree from pot and place in water filled hole. Plant at the level it was grown in the nursery (the same level as the top of the root ball). Do not put the bud union (graft) below the soil.
5. Add soil back to the hole filling all air pockets under and around the root ball. (THIS IS A CRITICAL STEP)
6. Newly planted trees should be watered regularly (daily for first week) for the first three months, if rains are inadequate. After the first week, allow the soil to dry down between watering.
7. **DO NOT MIX FERTILIZER IN HOLE BEFORE PLANTING.** However, you can spread fertilizer on the ground around the tree the same day you plant. Fertilize at least every 3 - 4 months (November, March, June, and August). You can fertilize more often, just reduce the amount. Use a citrus fertilizer at a rate of 1 - 2 lbs. for every year of age. Fertilizer should be applied around drip line of tree not up next to the trunk. Fertilizer should contain minor elements, not just N-P-K. You can also use slow release fertilizer. Follow the instructions on the bag.

Planting in Containers – Choose a container that is 7 to 15 gallon size (at least 14" deep).

1. Select a soil mix. You want a well-drained soil, not heavy topsoil. Any of the commercially available potting mixes should work as long as they will drain, some are labeled for citrus and cactus. Mixes with wood chips are a good choice. Do NOT use soil mixes that contain moisture control additives.
2. Place soil in bottom of pot so that the tree is placed in the pot with the existing soil level at the top of the new soil level. If pot is not as deep as the root ball, then cut off roots. Never bend the tap root to make it fit. Do not put the bud union (graft) below the soil.



3. Finish filling pot with soil, taking care to pack well so all air is removed. (THIS IS A CRITICAL STEP)
4. Water thoroughly. Watering will probably be more frequent since your tree is not planted in the ground. Let soil dry between watering. If tree stands in water, it will get root disease. Although you may need to water daily for the first week or two.
5. Fertilize at least every 3 - 4 months using a citrus fertilizer as described above. Again, minor elements are the key to a good citrus fertilizer. Slow release fertilizers work great with container trees, but you still need one with minor elements. You can fertilize more frequently with smaller amounts.

Cold Weather Care

While some citrus varieties are cold tolerant, most citrus is not. Citrus is a sub-tropical plant. Regardless of where you live, it may be necessary to protect your tree during freezing conditions.

If the plant is still in a container, set the plant indoors if there is the possibility of a frost or freeze.

If a freeze is forecast, cover the tree with a sheet or blanket. Covering should be removed when outside temperature reaches 36 degrees or more. If several freezing nights are expected, you can build a “mini-greenhouse” out of PVC pipe around your tree and then cover with blankets or plastic. This would not have to be removed until cold weather was past. Just don’t let the covering touch the leaves. Also, trees should be well hydrated before a freeze. Plan to water very heavily the day before freezing temperatures are expected. Some leaf droppage can be expected following a freeze, but this should be a temporary situation.

NEVER prune the tree after a hard freeze until the new growth is well underway. If no new growth appears on the tree by late spring, the tree has sustained severe damage. Any new growth above the graft is new flush and is a good sign the tree has survived the freeze and should continue to produce. Any new growth below the graft (bud union) will be citrus rootstock and should be removed.

Spraying

Many people choose not to spray their trees and we understand and appreciate this. However, there are several insects and diseases that affect citrus that spraying will help inhibit. First, leaf miners are a very small insect that lays its larvae under the cuticle of the leaf. These larvae “mine” through the leaf leaving ugly serpentine marks that turn brown and curl the leaf. This can be alleviated by using spray oil like Neem Oil or Citrus Spray Oil. You can also use a systemic product like Bayer Fruit, Citrus and Vegetable to give longer protection. The Bayer product also helps protect trees from damage of the Asian Citrus Psyllid which transmits Greening Disease. Fungicides are sometimes needed to control things like Post Bloom Fruit Drop and Greasy Spot. If you choose not to use chemicals of any kind, dish soap and water can be very helpful in keeping leaf miners at bay, you just have to use it more often.

If you think your tree has a disease or other problem, contact your local county extension agent for a diagnosis.

Other sources of information can be found on-line. Helpful links are on our website: www.briteleaf.com