

Congratulations on your new tree! We are excited for you to embark on this journey. Please read this guide before you plant — a few key steps that will make the difference between a tree that thrives and one that struggles. Growing citrus takes real care and attention — it can't just be planted and left alone.

Report any damage by sending photos to info@briteleaf.com within 24 hours of receipt.

We need photos of both the tree AND the box. Any other details you can add are always helpful.

- Remove tree from box the day you receive it. Remove the screws used to secure the tree, open the bottom of the box and pull the tree out. Keep in a shaded location until you plant.
- Remove the bag that we used to keep the soil and fertilizer contained. Water if needed.

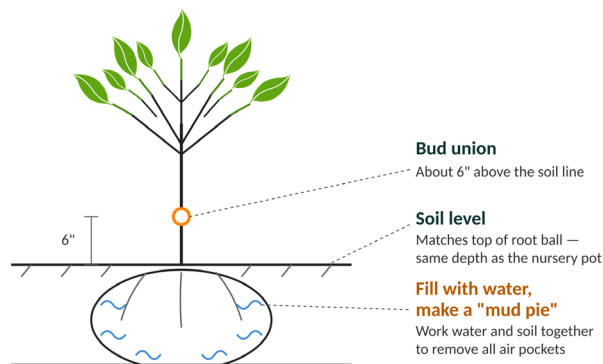
⚠ WARNING: The tree can stay in the grower pot until you are ready to plant it. However, you must keep the tree out of direct sun until it's planted. If the side of the pot is exposed to full sun, it can get hot enough to damage the roots which can kill the tree.

We periodically prune our trees on the bench to shape them and keep their size manageable. This doesn't harm the tree. New growth will start soon, and pruning helps the tree develop more branches.

PLANTING YOUR TREE

These steps apply whether you're planting in the ground or in a container — differences are noted.

- 1. Ground:** choose a site with 6–8 hours of full sun daily, well-drained soil, and at least 7 - 8 ft. (4 – 5 ft. for dwarf trees) from buildings, fences, and other trees. The south side of a house or other wind-blocking structure helps protect the tree from winter cold.
Container: choose a pot that's 7 to 15 gallons and at least 14" deep with multiple drain holes. Starting in partial shade is helpful to acclimate before moving to full sun because containers can get hot and dry out faster than the ground.
- 2. Ground:** clear a 2–3 ft. circle of weeds and grass, then dig a hole slightly wider than the root ball, but not much deeper.
Container: use a well-draining soil mix — not heavy topsoil. Citrus/cactus mixes, mixes with wood chips, or coconut coir all work well. Be careful adding compost, it can cause root burn if not fully decomposed.
- 3.** Remove the pot before planting. If you received a paper "Ellepot," there's no need to remove the paper.
- 4.** Place the tree so the top of the root ball is level with the surrounding soil — the same depth it was grown at the nursery. Keep the bud union well above the soil line (see diagram). In a container, trim roots if needed, but never bend the tap root.
- 5. Ground:** fill the hole with water and work it into a "mud pie" as you backfill (see diagram) — making sure to remove air pockets around or under the roots.
Container: pack the soil firmly as you fill the pot, again making sure no air pockets around or under the roots.



DO NOT PUT FERTILIZER IN THE HOLE

This can burn the roots and damage the tree.

NO MOISTURE CONTROL

Container soil mixes that contain moisture control additives.

KEEP CLEAR

Mowers and weed whackers can damage the bark of your tree and usually result in death!

MULCH

Can be used but be careful not to mound it up around the trunk.

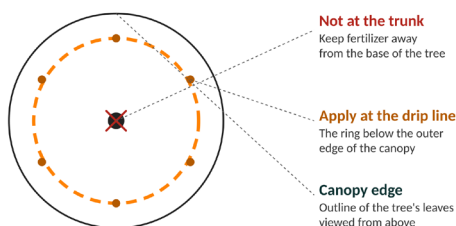
- 6. Water thoroughly,** then daily for the first week, then every few days for the first few months until roots establish. Let the soil dry between waterings after week one; test with a finger before watering again. A good indicator that roots are growing is that you will also start getting new flush on the tree. **Containers may need more frequent watering** since they dry out faster. Citrus needs water but can't tolerate standing in water — this will damage the roots, so always let the soil dry out between waterings.
- 7. Ground:** keep the area free of weeds and grass — use a herbicide labeled for grass or remove by hand.
Container: remove weeds so they don't compete for nutrients and water.
Don't damage the trunk with a mower or weed whacker. This can kill the tree.

ROOTED CUTTINGS

Rooted cuttings are grown without a rootstock and are not recommended for planting in the ground — container growing only. They're meant to grow bushy, but you're welcome to prune them to shape.

FERTILIZER OPTIONS

Your tree ships with a small amount of slow-release fertilizer to hold it over until planting — always follow the manufacturer's instructions for whatever product you choose.



It's safe to fertilize the same day that you plant!
Put fertilizer on top, NOT in the hole!
Never use spike types, these can burn the roots!
Choose a fertilizer with NPK and minor elements.
Fertilize regularly — trees need to eat too!

- a. Choose a citrus fertilizer with **minor elements**, not just N-P-K — minor element deficiencies usually show up first and are key to healthy citrus. Look for Magnesium, Calcium, Boron, Copper, Molybdenum, Manganese and Zinc on the label.
- b. Only use fertilizers that you spread on top of the soil or mix into water. **Never use spike types, these can burn the roots.**
- c. **Granular:** feed at least every 3 months; avoid applying in winter if planted outdoors. More frequent feeding at a reduced rate works even better.
- d. **Slow or Controlled-Release:** can be applied less often — a great option for container trees.
- e. **Water-soluble:** keep a jug mixed so it's easy to apply at every watering. Another great container option.

PRUNING AND SPROUTS ON GRAFTED TREES

In containers or the ground, remove any sprouts/suckers that develop from the soil line up to about 12–18" while they're young and tender. This keeps the trunk clean and prevents rootstock sprouts from taking over. You can prune branches to balance the tree's growth, but don't overdo it or you cut off fruiting potential.

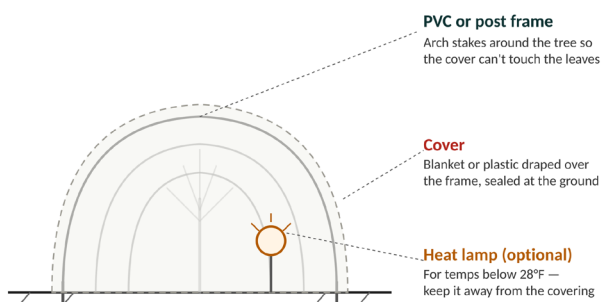
COLD WEATHER CARE

Citrus is a subtropical crop, and most varieties need some cold protection especially in the first year.

Containerized trees: if possible, move indoors to a garage or warmer spot ahead of any frost or freeze.

Outdoor trees: water heavily the day before a freeze — well-hydrated trees handle cold better.

Cover: below 32°F, cover with a frost cloth or blanket (plastic ok as long as it doesn't touch the tree). Remove coverings once temps reach 45°F. For multiple freezing nights, build a "mini greenhouse" out of posts or PVC and cover with a blanket or plastic (keep it off the leaves) to leave on until the cold passes. You can also add a heat lamp, just keep it away from the covering.



Don't let the cover touch the tree — leaves and branches can still freeze wherever they touch the cover.
Remove the cover once temps rise above 45°F.
Some leaf drop after a freeze is normal — it should be temporary.

⚠ AFTER A FREEZE: Never prune after a hard freeze until new growth is well underway. No new growth by late spring means severe damage. New growth above the graft is a good sign the tree survived; any growth below the graft (bud union) is rootstock and should be removed.

SPRAYING — optional but helps inhibit several common citrus pests and diseases.

1. **Leaf miners** tunnel through leaves, leaving brown serpentine trails and curling. Treat with Neem oil or citrus spray oil; diluted dish soap works too but needs more frequent application.
2. A **systemic product** (e.g., Bioadvanced Fruit & Citrus Tree) gives longer protection against leaf miner and helps guard against the Asian Citrus Psyllid, which spreads Citrus Greening/HLB.
3. **Fungicides** are sometimes needed for issues like Post Bloom Fruit Drop and Greasy Spot.
4. Always spray in the morning or late afternoon, never midday — sprays can burn leaves in direct heat.
5. **Individual Protective Covers (IPC's)** can be added to protect from insects and also provide some cold protection. Ask us about purchasing.