



Harvest of the Month

CITRUS



All About Citrus-

**Grow your own
immune-boosting
powerhouse!**

Oranges, lemons, limes,
grapefruits, mandarins,
kumquats and more!



Social Science

The earliest center of citrus speciation was Asia; mandarins in SE China, pomelos on the islands of SE Asia, and citron in India. As the climate shifted and the original species began to spread and cross with each other, citrus species spread in all directions from that center. A few thousand years ago many cultures began cultivating citrus and then humans began to spread them even further. By the 1800s all common citrus species were being grown in Southern Europe, where the climate made for higher quality fruit than could be grown in their ancient homelands. Citrus came to the United States by way of Spanish explorers who brought it to Florida, perhaps as early as the 17th century. Today, Florida and California are still worldwide leaders in citrus production.

Botany

Citrus is a genus of flowering shrubs and trees with many, many species cultivated around the world. All the species grown today come from only five ancestral species of citrus. The most commonly known are *Citrus reticulata*, commonly known as Mandarin Oranges and *Citrus maxima*, commonly known as pomelos. One other important ancestral species was *Citrus medica*, commonly known as citron. All the other commonly known citrus fruits are crosses from those, and a few other, ancient species. For example sweet oranges were originally a cross between mandarins and pomelos, and later grapefruits were a cross between sweet oranges and pomelos. Lemons and Mexican or Key limes original parentage was citron and another ancient minor species. One interesting species grown in this area for its interesting fruit is the buddha's hand, which is a very old species of *C. medica*.

Los agrios means the citrus
in Spanish.

Nutrition

Citrus is in season in the winter, a time where it offers our bodies a much needed boost of vitamin C. Like other fruits, it's also high in fiber and packed with anti-inflammatory benefits.

Growing Tips



Planting Preparation:

Citrus trees come in a wide variety of sizes, depending on the variety and rootstock. You can get full sized orange and grapefruit trees that can grow to 30 ft. tall. But you can also find dwarf and container varieties of many species, especially mandarins and lemons, that will top out at 4 ft. Plan your plant spacing accordingly.

Proper Spacing and Care:

All citrus requires soil that is somewhat acidic. Citrus requires good drainage, they will not tolerate growing in saturated soils for long periods. But if not watered adequately they will drop their leaves. This can be a common problem in container grown trees. Citrus likes to be fertilized regularly.



Harvesting Tips:

Citrus season runs December through mid-spring depending on the variety. Citrus must be left to ripen on the tree, and the fruit can hang on the tree for a period after ripening; but some varieties can over-ripen if not harvested in the appropriate window. As fruit matures, begin to sample fruit for optimum harvesting time.



Creating With Citrus

As a fun craft or pantry project, you can dehydrate citrus slices in the oven or food dehydrator. You can string them on a garland to hang in the kitchen, store them in jars to garnish beverages, or blend the dried citrus into a powder that can be blended with sugar or salt.



Cooking with Citrus



Citrus is a beloved and versatile ingredient used in kitchens across the world. You can use its juice for sweet and savory recipes, including marinade, vinaigrette, or refreshing beverages. It can also be preserved with sugar in marmalade, fermented in salt or dehydrated for a fun garnish or snack. Feature its zingy fruit in a seasonal salad, mix it's juice and zest into a cake, or whisk it up with butter and eggs for lemon bars- the possibilities are endless!

[For citrus recipes visit SGN's Cooking From The Garden page](#)