

TIPS FOR GROWING CITRUS THIS FALL... AND THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

CITRUS PEST & DISEASE PREVENTION PROGRAM

Autumn in California is a great time of year to check your citrus tree to make sure it has the right nutrients necessary to grow healthy before you (quite literally) reap the fruits of your labor. While the seasonality of citrus trees can vary depending on a range of factors like temperature, location, soil type and more, many types of citrus do require maintenance and care throughout the year.

Here are some tips to help your citrus tree grow healthy, starting as early as this fall:

1. FERTILIZING

Apply the recommended amount of fertilizer, including nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, and cover with compost, then water. Make sure to water heavily if it's a newly planted tree so the water sinks into the roots. Fertilize throughout the year, but especially during February, May, August and October. If you have a new tree, it's especially important to fertilize regularly during the first four years.

2. MANAGING PESTS

Pest management is crucial to protect not just your own tree, but also your neighbors' trees and the state's citrus. Inspect for a pest called the Asian citrus psyllid (ACP) monthly or whenever watering, spraying or pruning trees and when harvesting fruit. While the psyllid has been found in many areas of California, the deadly plant disease it can spread, called Huanglongbing (HLB), has only been found in Orange, Los Angeles and Riverside counties thus far.

Once a citrus tree is infected with HLB, there is no cure and the tree will die. HLB affects all citrus plants, including orange, lemon, lime, mandarin, pomello, kumquat, grapefruit and tangerine trees. It also affects some relatives of citrus, like orange jasmine and curry leaf trees. If you have any of these plants in your yard, inspect them for symptoms of ACP when trees have new leaf flush or when tending to trees. Visit CaliforniaCitrusThreat.org/pest-disease to view photos of the pest and disease.

If you live in Central or Northern California, where the ACP is rare, act fast and call the CDFA Hotline immediately at 800-491-1899 to report ACP. If you live in Southern California, then ACP is well established, so keep an eye out for HLB symptoms. You can call a licensed pesticide applicator or treat your citrus trees yourself with insecticides to keep the ACP numbers low. It's also important to control ants on your citrus tree, as ants may protect harmful pests like the ACP. Consult your local home and garden center regarding ant control and always the product's label directions.

No matter your location, check for ACP and HLB on your citrus tree. **If you think you've found the ACP or HLB, call the statewide hotline at 800-491-1899.**

For additional expert help, consult your local [University of California Extension](#) or a [UC Master Gardener program](#), or visit a reputable nursery to learn about recommended products to protect your tree from the psyllid and other pests, like leaf miner. If you are unsure how close you are to an HLB detection or quarantine area, visit the UC Agriculture and Natural Resources' app [here](#) where you can enter your address into the search bar and see your proximity to HLB.

3. WATERING

During the first year, apply water at the tree's trunk. As the tree grows, water a larger area around the tree. Newly planted trees should be watered every three to seven days. Older trees can be watered every week or two. Citrus trees tend to like being moist to somewhat dry in between watering, so monitor outdoor temperatures and limit watering if needed.

Citrus trees do not adjust well to colder temperatures, such as 45 degrees Fahrenheit or below. If temperatures do get this low in your area, consider growing a potted citrus tree indoors to keep it from low temperatures. Potted citrus trees can require extra heat, sunlight and attention. Consult a gardening expert for tips on the best varieties of citrus to grow indoors. You can get started by reading about [growing citrus in planters from Gardeners.com](#).

4. HARVESTING

Harvesting time depends on the citrus variety and its seasonality. Take time reviewing the harvest because not all fruits on the same tree may ripen at the same time. In general, you know when they are ready to harvest when they have reached the desired size and ripeness/color. Some citrus can drop from the tree when fully ripe, so check the citrus tree regularly when tending to it to see if it is ready to harvest. Learn about [how to tell when a citrus tree is ripe from SF Gate](#).

5. PRUNING

Most citrus varieties do not require significant pruning. Lemons are the exception to this rule. Heavy pruning should not take place in winter as it will make trees susceptible to frost damage. Pruning should be done after fruit is harvested so you do not interfere with the fruit's growth. Remove all dead branches, stems that are weak and small, and shape your tree like a canopy. When pruning, make sure sunlight is evenly distributed on your tree. [FruitMentor has a helpful video on how to prune citrus trees](#), while also avoiding the spread of the deadly citrus tree disease, HLB. If you are located where the disease has been found in Orange, Los Angeles or Riverside

counties, it is important to double bag leaves and stems and check all pruning materials and equipment for trimmings and debris before moving plant material from your property.

IF YOU FOLLOW THESE TIPS, GROWING CITRUS CAN BE A FUN AND FRUITFUL EXPERIENCE.

HAPPY GARDENING!

