

Growing Citrus in Southern AZ (22 Common Questions)

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1. What variety should I grow?

- Lemons – Highly productive, fairly cold sensitive
- Limes – Highly productive, the most cold sensitive
- Oranges – The most popular, fruit tends to dry out, particularly on sandy or gravelly soils (Foothills)
- Mandarins (Tangerines) – Also popular, will occasionally dry out
- Tangelos – Adaptable to any area
- Grapefruit and Pummelo – Adaptable to any area

Lemon

- Vigorous trees, Acidic fruit. May be harvested green or yellow, from late July until March. Harvest when the fruit is big enough

'Lisbon' and 'Eureka' Lemon

- Vigorous trees, Acidic fruit. Moderately frost tolerant, 'Lisbon' more frost tolerant than 'Eureka.' 'Eureka' is thornless.

'Meyer' Lemon

- Small trees.
- Moderately acidic fruit
- 'Meyer' is more frost tolerant than other lemons
- 'Meyer' has a thin peel, is very juicy, and has an orange coloration.

'Mexican' or 'Key' Lime

- Small trees, May be thorny. May bloom continuously throughout the year. Acidic, small fruit. Fruit yellow when mature, Very low frost tolerance

Bearss Lime

- Larger fruit than the Mexican Lime. Trees short-lived due to wood pocket disease. Quite frost sensitive.

Orange

- Medium to Large trees. Most popular citrus in the world. May be harvested from November until May.

Round Orange

- Early and mid-season varieties marketed in Arizona as "Arizona Sweets". Large tree. Sweet, juicy fruit with few seeds. Moderate frost tolerance. Harvested November through February. Best for juice or eating fresh.

'Valencia' Orange

- Late season, harvested from February until May. Large tree. Sweet, juicy fruit with few seeds. Moderate frost tolerance. May regreen in warm spring months. Best for juicing, has tough section walls.

'Navel' Orange

- Mid-season, harvested from November until March. Large tree. Sweet fruit with no seeds. Moderate frost tolerance. Best for fresh eating, is not particularly juicy.

Pigmented (Blood) Orange

- Mid-season, harvested from December until February. Large tree. Sweet, juicy fruit with some seeds and a distinctive flavor. Flesh and peel color requires cool nights to develop.

Orange Ripening Chart

Early Season

November – December

Hamlin

Marrs

Fukumoto Navel

Fisher Navel

Beck Navel

Atwood Navel

Mid-Season

December – February

Trovita

Shamouti

Washington Navel

Cara Cara Navel

Moro Blood

Tarocco Blood

Late Season

February – May

Valencia

Chislett Navel

Powell Navel

Lane Late Navel

Sanguinelli Blood

Mandarins

- Small to Large trees, Wide variety of fruit characteristics. May be harvested from October until March

Clementine

- Mid-season, harvested from December until February, Small to medium tree. Fruit are small, easy to peel, and have a distinctive flavor, but may be seedy. Seedless if grown in isolation. Requires a pollinator for best production and fruit size. Moderate frost tolerance. 'Algerian', 'Fino', 'Clemenules' or 'W. Murcott Afourer' common cultivars. Tango is seedless.

Fairchild

- Early to mid-season, harvested from November until February. Small to medium tree. Fruit are small, rather difficult to peel, and seedy, but with good flavor. Requires a pollinator for best production. Moderate to good frost tolerance.

Kinnow and Gold Nugget

- Late season, harvested from February until March. Large tree. Fruit are medium sized, not easy to peel, seedy, but are very sweet. Tends to bear alternately. Moderate to good frost tolerance. Gold Nugget is seedless.

Minneola Tangelo

- Mid-season, harvested from December until February. Large, vigorous tree. Fruit are large, easy to peel, and juicy. Moderate to good frost tolerance. Susceptible to sunburn.

Grapefruit

- Large trees. White or red fruit. May be harvested from November until June, best flavor after January.

'Marsh' Grapefruit

- Vigorous, tall tree. 3½ to 4 inch diameter fruit. Seedless, good flavor.

Pigmented Grapefruit

- Vigorous, tall tree, 3½ to 4 inch diameter fruit. Seedless, good flavor. Redblush (Ruby Red) is the most commonly available. Rio Red flesh color is 5 times more intense than Redblush. Flame is a new variety from Florida. Star Ruby is no longer recommended.

Pummelo

- Related to grapefruit, Large, seedy fruit. May be white or pigmented. Generally, do not have a bitter flavor.

'Chandler' is a common variety. Also, 'Red' and 'Sarawak'.

Oro Blanco or Melogold

- Grapefruit x pummelo hybrid. Combines the seedlessness of a grapefruit with the lack of acidity of the pummelo. Ready to eat in December and January.

2. How can I get a dwarf tree?

- Rootstock choice – 'Flying dragon is dwarfing (4-6 ft).
 - C-35 Citrange, Swingle Citrumelo, and Trifoliate Orange are semi-dwarfing (8-12 ft)
 - All others are standard – 12-20 ft.
- Pot the tree or restrict the wetted zone when irrigating
 - Root restriction, or water restriction

3. How do I plant my tree?

- Plant in spring or fall. Fall is better, but spring is OK. No soil amendments necessary. Make hole sufficiently wide, but not too deep. Plant at grade or above. No air pockets

4. How do I water my tree?

- Avoid leaf curl. Water sufficiently deep. Water sufficiently wide. Water more in summer than in winter.
- Most roots are in the top three feet of soil, water to that depth. Use shovel, spade or probe to test
- Most roots extend at least as far out as the canopy. For a tree to grow to its capacity, the wetted pattern should extend out this far. Will need to add drippers, or extend the "well" as the tree grows.
- Mature trees (3 years old or more). For flood or basin irrigation, apply water every 10 to 14 days in the hottest part of the summer, and every 3 to 4 weeks in the coolest part of the winter.
 - For drip irrigation, irrigate every 3 to 10 days.
- Small trees. For flood or basin irrigation, apply water every 7 days in the hottest part of the summer, and every 14 days in the coolest part of the winter.
 - For drip irrigation, irrigate every 2 to 7 days.

Do not water too frequently; you will have salt burn on leaves. To counter salt damage, leach and use sulfur to loosen soil. Leach – water for 12 to 24 hrs continuously, once or twice a year. Use Soil treatments – gypsum, liquid sulfur.

5. Can I over-water my tree?

- Yes, if the tree is planted too deeply. Otherwise, it is possible in the valley, but virtually impossible on the sandier soils.
- Caliche layer can be a problem, must break through it.
- Some will over-water in the winter

