

Written by: Gail Key

Citrus's in Lake Havasu

Who would have thought that citrus would do so well in the middle of the desert! Citrus trees are favored plants for desert landscaping. Fresh citrus, ready to be picked, is an easy-to-grow treat, but we probably only need one lemon tree per neighborhood!

Varieties: **grapefruit** - Marsh seedless, red, pink or blush; **lemons** – Eureka, Lisbon, Myers if certified to be grown in Arizona; **limes** – Mexican, Key or Bearss; **Mandarin** – Kinnow; **oranges** - Trovita, Valencia, Hamlin and Marrs; **tangelo** – Minneola, Orlando; **tangerines** – Fairchild. Navel oranges fruits poorly in warm weather does well in cool winter, may be grown here but not usually.

Planting: as with all planting here the hole should be 3 -5 times the width of the container the plant comes in, the depth of the root ball and with the top of the root ball about one inch higher than the surrounding soil. Do not add any amendments, just the native soil minus the bigger rocks. Amendments are only added to roses, vegetables and some decorative plants. If you pamper them they will not want to venture out into the native soil!

Depending on the variety mature adult citrus trees average 20-25 feet tall and 16-18 feet wide. If you do not have the space for this size tree consider planting dwarf citrus trees. Dwarf varieties have the same size and quality fruit but yield about 50-60 percent less.

Irrigation: the amount of water and the length of time all depend on the type of soil, elevation, sun and wind exposure. Clay soils hold moisture, so watering intervals may need to be extended to allow the clay to dry out. Sandy or rocky soils drain quickly, so watering may need to be more frequent. Citrus do like to dry out between waterings, so the rule of thumb here is winter every 7-10 days and summer every 3-5 days.

Build a well around the tree trunk but not touching it and another well at the drip line (the end of the limbs). Several inches of mulch between the two wells around the base of the tree after planting helps maintain soil moisture, reduce soil temperature and inhibit weed germination.

Fertilizing: Fertilizing newly planted citrus is unnecessary for the first two years it is in the ground. However, you may apply small amounts of nitrogen after the tree is established and new growth has emerged. Fertilize three times a year with one-third of the tree's total annual nitrogen requirements applied each time. Fertilize January/February, April/May just before it is a steady 100 degrees, September/October – after the steady 100 degrees are gone.

Pruning: Little pruning is required of citrus as they need all the shade on the trunk to prevent sunburn. Prune only to remove dead branches and suckers on the lower trunk and if the branches are a danger.

Come join us at the FREE Citrus Workshop on Saturday, March 7 from 10 to 11 a.m. at the Library. We are fortunate to have a well known citrus expert, Glenn Wright, Associate Research Scientist, UofA, Yuma Agriculture Center coming to Lake Havasu City for this workshop.

Gail Key, Lake Havasu City Master Gardener Coordinator. For more information, contact the Lake Havasu City Master Gardeners by leaving a message on the HotLine at 505-4105 or visit us at the Library for Home Garden Day the first Tuesday of every month from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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