

## Citrus Fruits in the Texas Gulf Coast Region

During a “Lecture and Lunch” at the Brookwood Community attendees learned how to grow and care for citrus trees. An enthusiastic, long time citrus grower shared his experiences and recommended hardy and tasty varieties for us to try out in our own gardens. He also informed us on specific pests and diseases that are currently threatening our entire citrus crops.



### Kumquats

- Are the hardiest to grow
- Bloom twice a year
- The ‘Meiwa’ type is a particularly sweet, tasty variety

### Grapefruit

- Grow well in Rio Grand valley, not so hardy around here
- ‘Blood sweet’ and ‘Rio Red’ are recommended varieties for our area

### Mandarin

- Satsuma varieties are easy to grow, very tasty and peel effortless
- Harvest fruit after Thanksgiving for maximum ripeness and flavor



### Lemon

- Come in many varieties: ‘Meyer’, ‘Eureka’, ‘Ponderosa’, ‘Lisbon’, etc.
- Improved varieties are crossed with oranges or mandarins
- Milder taste develops with age
- Not frost hardy!



### Oranges

- ‘Moro blood’, ‘Naval’, ‘Valencia’, ‘Republic of Texas’, just to name a few
- Do well in our climate

### Limes

- ‘Key’, ‘Mexican’, ‘Persian’, ‘Kaffir’, etc.
- Not robust enough for our area



### Pummelo

- ‘Chandler’, ‘Hirado’, ‘Buttan’, etc.
- Large fruit but plant not hardy for our climate

## Hardiness

Citrus trees do not adjust well to fluctuating conditions. Sudden changes in temperature can kill the plant. The citrus flower develops on the growth from the previous year.

# The Care of Citrus Trees

## Fertilizer

- Citrus only need nitrogen
- Fertilize in Spring, never in fall
- Plant must stop growing before winter

## Pruning

- Only light pruning needed
- Remove crossing branches

## Harvesting

- Protect yourself from large thorns
- Best to cut fruit from stem
- Disinfect shears to avoid spreading diseases

## Propagating

- Must start with a hardy understock
- Insert bud of a citrus into the bark of the root stock
- Lime can grow from cutting
- Grown from seed takes 5-8 years for fruit to develop

## Pests Endangering the Citrus Industry

### Rust mite (ugly, but not harmful)

- Affects the outside appearance of the fruit (as does bird pecking) but does not harm the plant or change the taste of the fruit

### Citrus Cancer

- A bacterial disease of citrus plants
- Brownish lesions visible on all parts of the plant
- Spreads by contact and through the air



### Citrus Greening Disease

- Most destructive disease for citrus, highly contagious, there is no cure; serious danger to gulf coast citrus growers
- Blotchy, asymmetrical mottling leaves, corky veins
- Bitter fruit
- Spreads by moving infected plants



## How Can You Help?

- Both serious diseases noted above, spread easily and must be contained in the area where they occur to prevent obliteration of entire citrus population
- Inspect citrus trees weekly for signs of disease
- Avoid moving infected plants or its leaves around the yard
- Do not take samples to a nursery if you suspect disease
- Don't move plants out of quarantined areas and across state lines
- Disinfect lawn equipment, tools and wash hands after working on citrus trees
- Contact 800 Tell TDA for advice on Citrus canker symptoms
- Go to [www.citrusalert.com](http://www.citrusalert.com) for more information or call 956-580-1917

## Mexican Fruit Fly

- Invasive pest threatens many fruit varieties in the Rio Grande Valley
- Spreading across the US
- Flies lay eggs in ripening fruit
- Larvae tunnel through the fruit
- Bacterial and viral organisms invade injured area, decay ensues



## What is Being Done?

The Texas Citrus industry along with the US and Texas Department of Agriculture have been working for decades on a suppression Program for the Mexican Fruit fly. In certain hot spots the program has released sterile fruit flies to, over time, eradicate the pest.

## How Can You Help?

- Remove all ripe fruit from the tree t the end of the season
- Remove fruit not intended for consumption immediately
- All citrus fruit should be removed by April 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Citrus discarded in trash bins should be double bagged to avoid attracting the fruit flies.



For quality Citrus and fruit trees grown and cared for in our area check out the 'Brazos Citrus Nursery' <https://brazoscitrus.com>

This is a whole sale supplier and Brookwood can order plants for you.