



Growing Citrus Inside In The Winter



Patty's Plants

Yes, it's possible to enjoy citrus plants and their fruit year-round. How? By growing them in containers and bringing them indoors for the winter. If you have a bright spot indoors you can grow oranges, lemons and limes successfully. All you need is a south-east, south-west or a south window in the winter.

The best are the small varieties such as 'Improved Meyer' lemon, 'Bearss' lime, 'Satsuma' mandarin, Calamondin oranges and Kumquat. These varieties are more likely to remain both healthy and productive in containers. Before moving the plant indoors, wash it completely with warm and slightly soapy water to clean off any bugs. Pests that you don't notice outdoors can become problems once inside.

Type of Container

Any container will work. Whatever kind of container you choose, make sure it has good drainage holes. To prevent soil from washing out, cover drain holes with a small square of window screen or a piece of nylon stocking, but don't cover the holes with stones, they can block the drainage hole.

Soils

Use a good potting soil mix for container plants. Add a little sand and worm casting to the mix. Never use ordinary garden soil for citrus or any plant. Garden soil is too heavy and could contain soil borne diseases as well as insects.

Watering and Fertilizing

Let the container dry slightly between watering. Soak the root ball thoroughly until water drains out the bottom once the top 2 to 3 inches of soil are dry. Take a wooden chopstick, push it down into the soil, if it comes up wet or the soil is dark and stuck on, it's not time to water. If it's light and flaky or there's nothing at all on the stick, water it thoroughly.

Sometimes the water drains out the bottom of the pot without soaking the root ball. This happens when the root ball dries and shrinks slightly, pulling away from the edges of the container. To help rewet the dried root ball, place three or four drops of a mild dish soap on it. The soap will help the water soak in so the root ball can expand to fill the container again.

More than most plants, citrus are prone to deficiencies of the micronutrients iron, manganese, and zinc. Inadequate amounts of any one of them will cause leaves to yellow while veins remain green. That's why adding worm castings helps, it has these micronutrients in it. Add it to the soil when planting or top dress the plant with it.

Special notes:

*When moving your plants back outdoors in spring, make the transition gradual, in at night, out during day until the night temperatures are in the upper 50's to low 60's..

*Homes in winter are darker and warmer, and have much drier air. That's why anything you can do to provide additional light and extra humidity is so helpful: grow lights, and a tray of pebbles under the pot with water in it for added humidity will help.

