



**Citrus are a must-have for any kiwi backyard, whether it's the humble lemon for soothing sore throats or the classic lime to add some zing to summer cocktails. Every yard should have at least one. They are evergreen and easy care and come in an array of forms and flavours. Follow these handy hints and tips and you will be well on your way to citrus success.**

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### **Where to grow**

Citrus prefer a sunny, well-drained position out of strong winds. Add a generous amount of Odeerings Compost before planting and if you're planting into clay soil add some sand to achieve good drainage. Planting dwarf citrus in pots is a great idea: not only do they look attractive, but they can be easily moved indoors during winter. Odeerings Shrub & Tub mix is perfect for potted citrus.

### **Watering**

Regular watering is very important especially when young trees are getting established and when trees are producing fruit. During hot dry months a good soak every couple of days or daily watering for a potted plant is required. A layer of mulch will help to retain water to the delicate surface roots. If you're finding your fruit dropping off the trees, or the flesh is very dry and lacking juice, generally increasing your watering will remedy these problems.

### **How to get the best start to a new citrus plant**

It's always exciting when buying new citrus and it already has fruit hanging from the branches. Unfortunately it is best to remove these fruit, as well as any flowers, to stop your plant from fruiting further. This should be done for the first two years. In the third year, pick off half the fruit and flowers, and in the fourth year let it flower and fruit normally. There is a method to this madness: by doing this you are putting the energy from fruiting back into the plant, creating a bigger healthier plant. A bigger plant means a bigger crop, well worth the sacrifices made in the earlier years.

### **Pruning**

Citrus don't require a lot of pruning and they are very easy care. They may need a light prune to shape the tree, and removal of any inner framework and crossing branches to allow sunlight and wind movement. Also remember to cut out any dead or diseased wood. Pruning is best done between March and September to avoid lemon tree borer. Watch out for rootstock growth, which will try and overtake the plant; this rootstock will need to be removed carefully due to thorns.

### **Feeding**

Citrus are 'gross feeders' so require regular fertilising with a special citrus fertiliser. Tui Citrus Food or Yates Thrive Citrus Liquid Plant Food is just what they need. They should be fed at least twice a year with a granular fertiliser and every two weeks during the fruiting season with the liquid food to ensure a bumper crop.

Follow the same guidelines with potted citrus, except substitute Odeerings Total Replenish for the Tui Citrus Food. Total Replenish and the Yates Liquid Plant Food are ideal for pots as some fertilisers can be too strong for pots and burn your plants. If you're finding the leaves are yellowing, this is most likely a magnesium deficiency. Feed with Epsom salts or Yates Magnesium Chelate; this will unblock the issue so the plants can start taking up nutrients again. Before fruiting, an application of Yates Flower & Fruit Booster Liquid Potash which is rich in potassium is like liquid gold for fruiting plants, and will help with fruiting and flowering and will sweeten the fruit.

### **Harvest time**

The fruit needs to be checked regularly for maturity because the fruit will change from immature to mature and over-mature while still on the tree. These changes are slow and will happen over months. Fruit will keep much longer on the tree and once picked citrus doesn't continue to ripen, so pick wisely. The only way to tell if your fruit is ready is to taste it. Yum!

### **Frost protection**

Most citrus will not tolerate temperatures below -2°C. There are a few options to protect your citrus during winter. Frost cloth is the cheapest but only lasts one or two seasons. It needs to be removed daily as it doesn't let the sunlight through. Mikroclima is more durable lasting at least 10 seasons and you don't need to remove it daily. Both of these would have to be used at double thickness to ensure full frost protection. Lastly you can protect your citrus with a natural spray called "Vaporguard". This organic spray will protect your citrus down to -3°C and last for three months, however, new foliage growth that appears during this three-month period will have to be re-sprayed to be protected.





**Yates® Conqueror Spraying Oil** is an organically certified mineral oil insect spray that works by coating pests with a suffocating film. Great for treating Scale, Mealy bugs, Aphids and Mites on your citrus.

**Yates® Flower & Fruit Booster Liquid Potash** is rich in potassium and ideal for citrus, roses, flowers, tomatoes and other fruiting plants. For larger, more abundant flowers and fruit.



For more advice on growing fruit talk to Yates on 0800 693 297, or via Live Chat on [yates.co.nz](http://yates.co.nz) Send your pics for quick problem solving!



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