INTRODUCTION

The dense, rounded crown of dark green, evergreen foliage and the pure white, extremely fragrant blossoms make citrus a popular garden choice for frost-free locations (Fig. 1). Ranging from 12 to 30 feet in height and 8 to 25 feet in width, depending upon species and cultivar, citrus can be used for shade, to screen unwanted views, or smaller varieties can be used in containers. The juicy, fragrant fruits vary from yellow, orange, or red, and are most noticeable in winter.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: Citrus spp.  
Pronunciation: SIH-trus species  
Common name(s): Citrus  
Family: Rutaceae  
USDA hardiness zones: 9 through 11 (Fig. 2)  
Origin: not native to North America  
Uses: espalier; fruit tree; hedge; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; screen; trainable as a standard; specimen; tree has been successfully grown in urban areas where air pollution, poor drainage, compacted soil, and/or drought are common  
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

DESCRIPTION

Height: 12 to 30 feet  
Spread: 15 to 25 feet  
Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms  
Crown shape: round  
Crown density: dense  
Growth rate: medium  
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)  
Leaf type: simple; trifoliate  
Leaflet margin: crenate; serrulate  
Leaflet shape: obovate; ovate

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Leaflet venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen; evergreen
Leaflet blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower
Flower color: white
Flower characteristics: pleasant fragrance; showy; spring flowering; winter flowering

Fruit
Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: 3 to 6 inches; 1 to 3 inches
Fruit covering: fleshy
Fruit color: green; orange; yellow
Fruit characteristics: attracts squirrels and other mammals; suited for human consumption; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; persistent on the tree; showy

Trunk and Branches
Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; thorns are present on the trunk or branches
Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: green
Current year twig thickness: medium

Culture
Light requirement: tree grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained
Drought tolerance: moderate
Aerosol salt tolerance: low
Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem  
Winter interest: tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers  
Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding  
Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time  
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: not known to be susceptible  
Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect tree health or aesthetics

USE AND MANAGEMENT

The green, thorny branches will rarely need pruning after a strong branch structure is developed. Prune so there is no bark embedded or pinched together in the branch crotches. This condition could cause the branch to break from the trunk when fruit loads it down. Prune out enough of the foliage on lateral branches so they remain less than half the diameter of the trunk.

Citrus should be grown in full sun on well-drained, slightly acid soil, and watered faithfully. Do not mulch the soil beneath citrus. It is very heat-tolerant and can be effectively used in a tough urban site such as a parking lot if dropping fruits will not pose a problem.

Many species of citrus are available. *Citrus limon* gives us lemons; *Citrus reticulata*, tangerines or Mandarin oranges; *Citrus sinensis*, sweet orange; *Citrus aurantifolia*, key limes; and *Citrus paradisi*, grapefruit.

Propagation is by grafting or layering.

Pests

Nematodes, scales, whiteflies, mites, caterpillars, fruitfly.

Diseases

Virus and fungus diseases. Twig galls sometimes form in response to a fungus infection.