



Citrus spp. Citrus¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

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

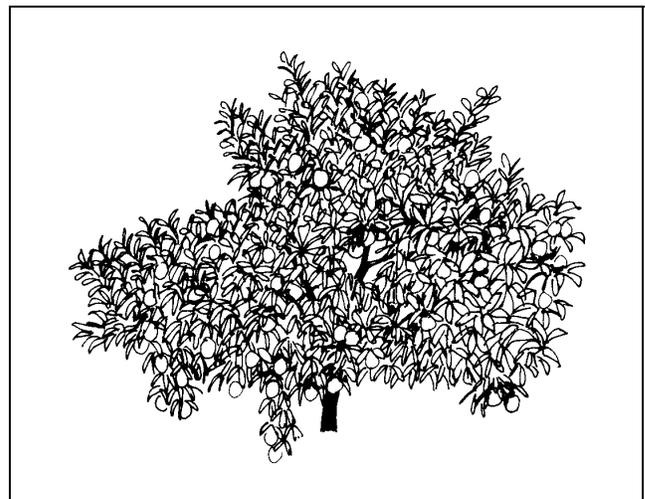


Figure 1. Young Citrus.

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

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-169, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.
2. Edward F. Gilman, associate professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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

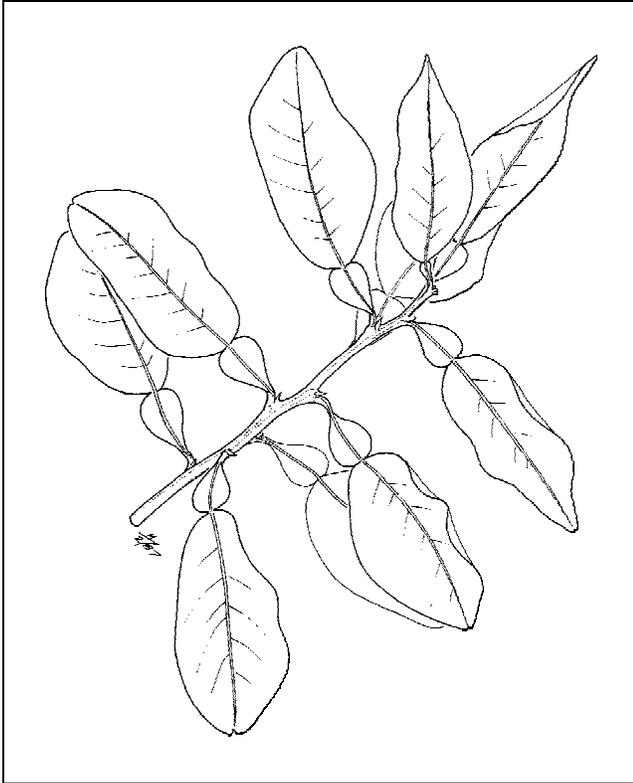


Figure 3. Foliage of Citrus.

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.