

citrus



CITROFORTUNELLA MICROCARPA, SYN. C. MITIS CALAMONDIN, PANAMA ORANGE

BOTANICAL AND COMMON NAMES

Citrus (sit-russ or sit-TRUSS)

Grapefruit (*C. paradisi*); Lemon (*C. limon*); Lime (*C. aurantifolia*); Orange (*C. sinensis*); Tangelo (*Citrus x tangelo*); Tangerine/Mandarin orange (*C. reticulata*); Pomelo (*C. maxima*)

Fortunella spp. (for-tu-NEL-uh)

Kumquat

Citrofortunella spp. (sit-roh-for-tu-NEL-uh)

Calamondin, Limequat

DESCRIPTION

These plants have shiny, dark green leaves; scented blossoms; and colorful fruit. They bloom all year and will produce fruits that can take up to a year to ripen. Last year's fruits often are still on the trees when the new flowers are blooming.

COLORS

Most *Citrus*, *Fortunella* and *Citrofortunella* blossoms are white. The fruit will be yellow, orange or green, depending on the plant.

CONSUMER LIFE

These plants can last for many years with proper care. Just a few flowers are open at any given time per plant.

AVAILABILITY

Citrus, *Fortunella* and *Citrofortunella* plants are available year-round.



C. MICROCARPA, SYN. C. MITIS CALAMONDIN, PANAMA ORANGE

tilizer like *Rhododendron* (azalea) food every three months.

SOIL The plants will do best in an acidic, moist, well-drained soil. If the leaves turn yellow, the soil needs to be made more acidic. One way to maintain soil acidity is to dissolve one-half teaspoon of magnesium sulfate (Epsom salts) in one quart of room-temperature water. Add this solution every two to three months.

GROOMING Trimming will stimulate new growth and additional blossoms. Prune in early spring to prevent leggy branches and encourage new growth. Keep all the dead branches trimmed off, and thin the plants to the three strongest trunks. Repot every two to three years.

WHEN TO PICK The fruits do not continue ripening after picking, so leave them on the trees until you're ready to use them.

challenges

ETHYLENE SENSITIVITY *Citrus*, *Fortunella* and *Citrofortunella* plants aren't sensitive to ethylene gas once blooming is finished, but during the bloom cycle, ethylene can cause bud drop. Check with your supplier to make sure your plants have been treated with an anti-ethylene agent at the grower level or during transportation.

PESTS Insects including aphids, thrips, scale, mealybugs and whiteflies can infest the plants. Wash or spray pests off with a solution of insecticidal soap.

fun facts

FAMILY The *Citrus*, *Fortunella* and *Citrofortunella* genera are members of the *Rutaceae* family, which includes about 150 genera and 1,500 species.

ORIGINS Native to Vietnam, northwestern India and southern China, *Citrus* plants are cultivated in subtropical and tropical areas throughout the world.

HISTORY Most researchers place the origin of *Citrus* plants in Southeast Asia from at least 4000 years B.C. They spread from Asia to North Africa and then to Europe. The crops flourished in southern Europe in the Middle Ages and were brought to America by the Spaniards (Columbus took seeds of *Citrus* fruits with him on his second trip) and the Portuguese in their explorations of the New World, around 1500.

problems and causes

FLOWERS FALL BEFORE FRUIT SETS Dry roots or lack of humidity.

FLOWER FAILURE Poor light, poor nutrition, erratic watering or too low temperatures.

LEAF YELLOWING Excessively wet or dry roots, drafts, too low temperatures or poor nutrition.

LEAF FALL Cold, drafts, high winter temperatures or overwatering. **sfr**

in-store and consumer care

LIGHT Bright, indirect light is best for plants displayed indoors.

WATER Keep the soil moderately moist at all times because drying can cause bud drop. Avoid standing water.

HUMIDITY Moderate humidity and daily misting are beneficial.

FERTILIZER Healthy, fertilized plants are more tolerant of insect attacks. Be sure plants are well-watered before applying fertilizer. Use a complete acidic-type fer-

Some information provided by:

Citrus Center, www.citruscentre.co.uk

Royal Horticultural Society, www.rhs.org.uk

IVillage, <http://home.ivillage.com>

The Garden Helper, www.thegardenhelper.com

Photos courtesy of The John Henry Company

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