



## Choosing Citrus Trees



Citrus are one of the best fruit trees for the home garden. Questions about citrus trees would also have to be one of the most common that we get here at Wattletree Horticulture.

If you are choosing a new citrus tree for your garden there are a few things that you should look out for including:

- A really healthy tree with bright green foliage and no sign of stunting
- A root system that is not root bound (if you are unsure ask to see the root system)
- A root stock suitable for both the type of tree and the soil type where you live

What I mean by this last point is that citrus trees are almost always grown by bud grafts. What this means is that the rootstock part of the tree is grown separately and then the desired type or variety of citrus is bud grafted on to the hardy rootstock. Different root stocks have been bred over the years for different soils and for different varieties.



Budded citrus stocks after propagation

The following table gives you a guide for the best rootstocks for different types of trees. You should be able to ask the people selling the citrus trees what rootstocks have been used and if they are suitable. If they cannot give you an answer you might be in the wrong place!

| Rootstock name                 | Preferred soil               | Suitable varieties                                   |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Sweet orange (Citrus sinensis) | Deep sandy                   | Oranges and mandarins                                |
| Carrizo and Troyer Citrange    | Wide range                   | Oranges, grapefruit, limes and mandarins             |
| Trifoliate orange              | Wide range but prefers loams | Oranges and Ellendale mandarin                       |
| Rough lemon                    | Deep sand                    | Lemons, grapefruit, limes, oranges, Murcott mandarin |
| Cleopatra                      | Wide range                   | Mandarin   |
| Benton citrange                | Wide range                   | Eureka Lemon   |
| Swingle citrumelo              | Wide range                   | Grapefruit   |

Table adapted from *Citrus pests and their natural enemies* by Dan Smith et al QDPI

To grow citrus well you should follow these simple ideas

- Plant in full sun
- Prepare the garden soil prior to planting with compost and manure
- Water every couple of days for the first few weeks and then once a week after establishment
- Prune only to keep in shape
- Fertilise with a general purpose or complete fertiliser at least twice a year, spring and autumn

Make sure that it has great drainage – most citrus do not like to have wet roots and may be prone to root rot.

