

# BUCHANAN'S

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## NATIVE PLANTS

# Organic Citrus Care

### Basic Care and Fertilization

- Citrus trees need to be planted in a well-drained location. If you don't have good drainage you should start by raising the soil level in the area by 6" using **Citrus and Fruit Tree Soil**. Or you could plant the tree in a large container.
- Make sure your citrus tree gets a minimum of 1" of precipitation each week, whether by hand or by nature. The rule of thumb is that when the top inch of soil is dry, it's time to water the plant again. Water deeply each time you water, NOT in short spurts in which the water only goes down an inch or two each time. Cover the soil with 2-3 inches of **pine bark mulch** or **pine needles** to retain moisture and insulate from heat and cold.
- If you plan to grow the citrus in a container, **Lady Bug Vortex** is an excellent potting soil for this purpose.
- Citrus requires full sun for best production, which usually means a Southwest exposure in your yard. It will benefit your new tree to pick any fruit off of it so that all its energy can go into root production for the first year.
- All the citrus sold at Buchanan's is grafted onto root stocks known to do well in our zone. All suckers (growth) coming from below the graft union should be cut off immediately.
- **Fertilize your tree three to four times a year between February and October.** The normal program is February, May, August, and October. Use a good granular fertilizer such as **MicroLife Citrus, Lady Bug 8-2-4, or Cottonseed Meal**. If you choose to use a liquid fish/seaweed product, such as **John's Recipe**, you will need to fertilize every two weeks for maximum effect.
- In winter, the tree's roots should be watered in deeply the night before a freeze in order to protect them from frost. When the tree is still small, it will be best to cover it with frost cloth as well. If you are growing the citrus in a pot, move the pot away from the North wind, water the roots and cover the tree with frost cloth. Small trees are especially susceptible to freeze damage.

*This and other plant care tip sheets are available at [Buchanansplants.com](http://Buchanansplants.com).*

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### Organic Citrus Care, continued

#### Common Pests and Diseases

- ❖ **Leaf Miner.** This is the larval stage of a flying insect which lays its eggs inside the leaf of new growth on citrus trees. When the egg hatches, the leaf miner feeds on the leaf as it mines between the layers of the leaf before going into its next stage of development.
  - **Treatment:** *This insect is NOT very detrimental to the health or production of fruit for this plant.* If you are concerned about the appearance, spray with **Spinosad (Captain Jack's Dead Bug)** or **Neem** on a weekly basis starting at the first sign of new growth.
  
- ❖ **Whitefly, Scale, Mealybug, Aphids, Psyllids.** If you see any of these pests on your citrus, it is most likely due the plant having been stressed for some reason. Most common reasons for stress:
  - The plant has not been watered as thoroughly as needed.
  - The plant is in the wrong place with too little sun or poor drainage.
  - The soil has been depleted of organic matter and nutrients.
  - Weather event.
  - **Treatment:** Spray with Neem, Safer Soap, or All-Seasons Oil, if necessary. Strengthen the tree with this "sick tree treatment": Scratch greensand into the soil, apply a liquid seaweed product such as Ocean Harvest and top-dress with compost.
  
- ❖ **Black Sooty Mold.** This fungus occurs in concert with the pests listed directly above, as these pests release a sticky honey-dew that attracts the mold.
  - **Treatment:** Treat for insects as above.
  
- ❖ **Giant Swallowtail Butterfly -- Not Necessarily a Pest**

Citrus trees are host plants to Giant Swallowtail Butterfly caterpillars. The caterpillars (which look like giant bird droppings) feed on the citrus leaves before forming their chrysalis. This will not seriously harm your tree nor will it diminish fruit production. However, it will result in a truly beautiful butterfly.