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Citrus

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What do you look forward to eating in the winter months? Could it be tangy, sweet, tart citrus? Many of these delicious, evergreen fruit trees can be successfully grown in areas of our county.

Choosing citrus for your garden will depend on your favorites and winter temperatures in your garden. Citrus varieties have varying degrees of cold tolerance. Cold tolerance is based on the number of hours a tree sits at the lowest temperature. Varieties that do best in our area from least to most cold tolerant are: Eureka and Meyer lemons tolerate to 32 degrees; Bearss Lime, Washington Navel, and Oro Blanco Grapefruit are to 28 degrees, many varieties of Mandarins tolerate to 25 degrees, and Kumquats tolerate down to 22 degrees. It's best to plant your citrus in a higher area in your garden as within several hundred feet temperatures can vary six to ten degrees depending on microclimates.

Citrus like soils that drain well, so for many of us that means planting them in raised beds or pots. Even, regular watering is important for blossom set and tree health. Citrus feeder roots are in the top 3-4 inches of the soil. Young citrus trees have different nitrogen needs than fully bearing mature trees. A tablespoon of a nitrogen-bearing fertilizer can be spread every four weeks and then watered in under young trees. Mature trees need one to three pounds of nitrogen per year around the drip line divided into three applications in the late spring, summer and early fall. Always check the label and follow directions.

Citrus, in general, have fewer pest problems than other fruit trees and most are specific to citrus. There are a few to watch for in our area including California red and cottony scale, citrus leaf miner, and citrus red mite. There are predators that feed on the aforementioned so minimizing pesticide use is important to allow natural enemies to survive. Lacewings, beetles, and Aphytis wasps feed on scale. Washing and rubbing off scale is usually all that's

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needed. Dusty, stressed trees are more susceptible to red mite. Thus, washing the leaves off occasionally, pruning to allow air circulation, and consistent watering will combat red mite populations.

One pest to watch for on citrus in El Dorado County is the Asian Citrus Psyllid (ACP). It's very small, but it's larva leave trails of a white, waxy substance. Feeding causes young growth to twist and curl. The ACP has been found in Yolo and Placer Counties as well as southern counties in California. If you suspect that you have ACP, call the CDFA Hotline immediately at 1-800-491-1899 to report. They will come out and verify, and treat your citrus trees.

During freezing temperatures that will test your varieties' cold tolerance: water the ground thoroughly, remove mulch from under the tree, wrap young tree trunks with cardboard or insulating material, and tent the tree with row cover or non-plastic material so that the fabric does not rest on the leaves. Citrus trees may need on very cold nights, incandescent lights (C7 or C9) draped throughout the foliage.

Additional information on growing citrus trees may be found at [homeorchard.ucdavis.edu/Fruits & Nuts/Citrus](http://homeorchard.ucdavis.edu/Fruits_&_Nuts/Citrus).

UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling [\(530\) 621-5512](tel:5306215512). Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news. You can also find us on Facebook.