



Care Plan

Maintenance & Growth Log

Site Location	PLT Leaders

Month	Water*, Pests, Weeds	Compost or Fertilize	Prune**	Caretaking Team & Notes	Done
JAN	Every 2 Weeks			Caretaker(s):	
				Height: Diameter: #Flowers: #Fruit #Picked: Fruit #Lbs:	
FEB	Weekly	Yes		Caretaker(s):	
				Height: Diameter: #Flowers: #Fruit #Picked: Fruit #Lbs:	
MAR	Weekly		Yes	Caretaker(s):	
				Height: Diameter: #Flowers: #Fruit #Picked: Fruit #Lbs:	
APR	Weekly			Caretaker(s):	
				Height: Diameter: #Flowers: #Fruit #Picked: Fruit #Lbs:	
MAY	Weekly	Yes		Caretaker(s):	
				Height: Diameter: #Flowers: #Fruit #Picked: Fruit #Lbs:	
JUN	Weekly		Yes	Caretaker(s):	
				Height: Diameter: #Flowers: #Fruit #Picked: Fruit #Lbs:	
JUL	Weekly			Caretaker(s):	
				Height: Diameter: #Flowers: #Fruit #Picked: Fruit #Lbs:	
AUG	Weekly	Yes		Caretaker(s):	
				Height: Diameter: #Flowers: #Fruit #Picked: Fruit #Lbs:	
SEP	Weekly		Yes	Caretaker(s):	
				Height: Diameter: #Flowers: #Fruit #Picked: Fruit #Lbs:	
OCT	Weekly			Caretaker(s):	
				Height: Diameter: #Flowers: #Fruit #Picked: Fruit #Lbs:	
NOV	Every 2 Weeks			Caretaker(s):	
				Height: Diameter: #Flowers: #Fruit #Picked: Fruit #Lbs:	
DEC	Every 2 Weeks			Caretaker(s):	
				Height: Diameter: #Flowers: #Fruit #Picked: Fruit #Lbs:	

*NEW TREE WATERING: 2-3 times Week 1, and 1-2 times Weeks 2-5. Do not fertilize until after new growth appears.

**PRUNING: Remove damaged leaves and any deadwood every session.



Lemon Tree Care Guide

Watering

Lemon trees grow best in soils that are damp but not soggy. Over-watering causes crown and root rot diseases. Under-watering causes loss of blossoms and dropped fruit. Watering tips:

- **New Plantings:** During the settling-in period, water 5-10 gallons in this cycle:
 - Week 1: 2-3 times/week
 - Weeks 2-5: 1-2 times/week
 - Thereafter: 1 time/week
- **Adjust Seasonally:** Watering schedules typically range from once a week in hot months to once every 3 weeks in cool months. Adjust for rainfall.
- **Dryness Test:** Water when the top surface of soil is dry but before deep soils dry out.
- **Amount of Water:** A common rule is to apply 10 gallons per inch of trunk diameter.
- **Watering Radius:** Watering should extend to the drip line of a tree, so allow your initial watering basin to erode away as roots will extend beyond it after the first year.
- **Water Deeply:** Once a tree has an established root system, water down to 36 inches.
- **Drip Irrigation:** After the first year, consider installing a drip system with heads around the outside of the tree canopy.
- **Lemons in Pots:** Do not water until the top surface of your potting mix is very dry to the touch. When watering, add slowly to avoid exposing roots. After watering, empty the water tray to avoid water sitting in the bottom of the pot.

Pest Control

Check new leaf growth regularly. Be sure to look at undersides of leaves, as this is where aphids, mites, scale, whiteflies and caterpillars prefer to eat or suck juices from new leaves. Also, be sure to review the World-Wide Citrus Threat at the beginning of this guide so you can identify Asian Citrus Psyllids. If pests are detected, use these safe organic treatments:

- **Soap Spray:** Effective against aphids and other pests such as mealybugs, thrips and whiteflies. Make soap spray by combining two teaspoons of dishwashing soap, a quart of water and a few drops of vegetable oil. Spray must cover both sides of all leaves and the entire stem. Repeat application 2-3 times, three days apart. An organic commercial version of this is Safer Insect Killing Soap.
- **Ladybug Attractors:** Ladybugs are friendly insects that feed mainly on aphids, scales and their eggs. They also eat mealybugs and other parasitic pests, such as white flies. Consider adding companion plants that attract ladybugs, including garlic, dill, parsley, dandelion, tansy, yarrow, mint and geranium.
- **Wash Potted Lemon Trees:** For potted lemons, a strong spray of water can knock aphids off the plant. Aphids congregate on the undersides of leaves, so pay special attention to that area.
- **Neem Oil:** Effective against aphids, whiteflies and scales as well as fungal diseases, such as powdery mildew, rusts, black spot and scab. Neem oil is a natural derivative of the neem tree, native to India. It's organic and biodegradable. The Environmental Protection Agency finds neem oil to have "...no unreasonable adverse effects," making it safe for both people and the environment.



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Fertilizing

If lemon tree foliage has a rich green color, it probably has enough fertilizer. Over-fertilization results in too much foliage growth and reduced fruit production. Over-fertilization can also cause salt accumulation, which leads to foliage dieback. Yellowing leaves are a sign of iron deficiency or overwatering.

Ground-Planted Trees

- **No Fertilizer When New:** When planting, don't fertilize new citrus trees.
- **Fertilizing Schedule:** After 6-8 inches of new growth, fertilize every 3 months during growing season (typically February, May, August). Do not fertilize in dormant season (winter).
- **Type of Fertilizer:** Use a 6-6-6 fertilizer formulated for citrus or palm trees. Apply in amounts recommended by the manufacturer (Typically 1 pound a year when young up to 2-3 pounds per year when mature).
- **Organic Fertilizers:** Look for Citrus-tone from Espoma (5-2-6) and Dr. Earth Organic 9 Fruit Tree Fertilizer (5-5-2) and follow manufacturer's instructions.
- **Fertilize to Drip Line:** Citrus trees feed from roots out as far as the outside edge of the tree's branches. Thus, spread fertilizers on soil a few inches from trunk out to the edge of the canopy drip line.
- **Water Immediately:** Water immediately and thoroughly after spreading fertilizers. This activates fertilizers.

Pot-Planted Trees

- **No Fertilizer When New:** When planting, don't fertilize new citrus trees.
- **Fertilizing Schedule:** After 6-8 inches of new growth, fertilize every 3 months during growing season (typically February, May, August). Do not fertilize in dormant season (winter).
- **Type of Fertilizer:** A slow-release (6-6-6) citrus fertilizer works best for potted lemon trees.
- **Organic Fertilizers:** Look for Citrus-tone from Espoma (5-2-6) and Dr. Earth Organic 9 Fruit Tree Fertilizer (5-5-2) and follow manufacturer's instructions.
- **Sign of Over Fertilization:** A white crust on the surface of potting mix indicates excess salts due to over fertilization. Citrus trees don't do well in salty soils. Correct this condition by running water through the pot for several minutes.



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Pruning

Citrus tree bark can sunburn, so prune to let some filtered light hit branches. This encourages the tree to sprout new leaves to cover exposed areas. Along with new leaves, flowers come, so smart pruning produces more fruit. Smart pruning also helps remove places where pests can hide. Prune so your tree can “breathe.” As you prune, look to ensure branch structures that can carry heavy fruit.

Pruning Steps

- **First-Year Training:** Prune only if necessary to train tree growth in desired directions.
- **Remove Suckers & Thorns:** Shoots sprouting below graft unions should be removed, as they won't produce preferred fruit. For safety, clip off thorns.
- **Remove Dead & Weak Branches:** Trim weak branches because they will produce inferior lemons or fruit that will fall from the tree before ripening.
- **Remove Crossing Branches:** Branches that cross compete for the same sunlight and can result in places for pests to hide. Keep the branch with better structure and remove crossing ones.
- **Encourage Upward Horizontal Branches:** Horizontal branches provide far more fruit than vertical branches and shade trunk branches. Remove downward-hanging branches, as they are not structurally sound.
- **Shape Overall:** Complete pruning by minor clipping to make a pleasing shape.

Additional Tips

- **Prune During Growth:** Prune any time a lemon is producing new leaves or flowers. You can prune during the year when harvesting fruit.
- **Cut to Shed Water:** Cut branches as close to trunk or main branch as possible and at an angle that does not allow water to get trapped.
- **Maximum Canopy Trim:** Don't prune more than one-third of the tree each year. Cutting more than that can stunt growth and reduce fruit production.
- **3-5 Main Branches:** Optimal branch structure for lemon trees is three to five main branches.
- **Train Branches:** Don't be afraid to use string or gardening tape to pull branches in good growth directions.
- **Wear Gloves:** Protect your hands from thorns or biting/stinging insects that may be lurking in your lemon tree.
- **Use Sharp Tools:** Clean cuts help reduce the chances of poor structure, fungus or pest infestations..
- **Paint Large Cuts:** Use water-based latex paint to cover exposed cuts.



Lemon Tree Care Guide

Weeding

Weeds compete for moisture and nutrients that should go to your lemon tree. Weeding tips:

- **Remove Weeds:** Pull all weeds within six feet of your tree.
- **Weed Guards:** To minimize weeds, install landscape fabric, mulch or wood chips under your tree, but keep all materials a foot away from the trunk to reduce the risk of pest and fungal attacks.
- **No Chemicals:** Avoid using “systemic” weed killers (chemicals that are put into the ground, taken up by roots and into trees), because you don’t want chemicals in your lemons.

Mulching

Think of mulch as a soft blanket to tuck around a tree. Mulch regulates soil temperature, retains moisture, provides nutrients and discourages weeds. Mulch tips:

- **Types of Mulch:** Lemons perform best with organic compost or chopped/dried leaves.
- **Spread 3-4” Thick:** Spread mulch 3-4 inches thick under the canopy area.
- **Avoid the Trunk:** Keep mulch a foot away from the trunk to reduce the risk of pest and fungal attacks.
- **Add Anytime:** Add mulch throughout the year as needed to keep soil covered.