

## Lemon

**Botanical Name:** *Citrus limon* (Rutaceae)

**Common Name:** Lemon

**Origin:** The exact origin of the Lemon is uncertain. Suggestions are that it originated in the Punjab region of Pakistan and India, or the eastern Himalayan region of southern China and upper Myanmar. The lemon was already known in China about 500 BC and reached Europe around AD 1000-1200. It is believed the Lemon fruit was introduced into Australia in 1788 by Captain Cook.

**Distribution:** Lemons can grow well in tropical and semi-tropical climate, with commercial production being mainly in the sub-tropical regions of the world.

**Australian Distribution:** Lemons are grown commercially in most mainland states, in Victoria around Sunraysia, and the Mid-Murray, in Queensland around North Moreton, in NSW and South Australia. There is a small contingent of growers around the Darwin and Katherine regions.

**Preferred Climate and Soil Types:** Citrus prefers areas of low to moderate rainfall, with cool winters and warm to hot dry summers. These areas produce good quality fruit. Citrus trees will grow best in soils of a medium texture, moderate depth, good drainage, high fertility, slightly acidic pH and low in soluble salts in a wide range of soil types. The warm year round temperatures of Darwin and Katherine enable fast growing, early maturing of fruit with correct cultural practices.

**Description:** Lemons are oval citrus fruits with smooth porous skin. Some fruits have a pointed tip on the bottom of the fruit while other lemons are rounded at the base. Lemon fruits colour range from greenish yellow to bright yellow. In many cultivated varieties the branches have stout, stiff thorns. They can contain up to 7% citric acid and are rich in vitamin C.

The Meyer lemon is native to China, and thought to be a cross between a true lemon and either a mandarin or common orange. Their leaves are dark green and shiny and the flowers are white and fragrant with a purple base. Meyer lemons have a sweeter less acidic taste than more commercially available lemons, and are popular due to their compact size, hardiness and productivity in and around Darwin.

**Varieties:** Tropical Meyer, Lisbon, Eureka

**Culture:** Seedling trees of Lemons, and citrus generally, can be vigorous, thorny and take a long while to fruit, therefore grafted trees are preferred. Trees require regular irrigation once wet season rains have stopped to prevent drying out, and

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pruning from a young age to encourage good branch structure. A complete NPK (Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Potassium) fertilizer with trace elements is required.

**Pests and Diseases:** Citrus Leaf Miner in young trees, Red scale, Oriental Spider Mite during the wet season, and Fruit Piercing Moth on Meyer lemons. Root rots and collar rots can occur in waterlogged situations

**Fruiting Season:** The main fruiting time is between late December to late February, but depending on the growing situation, and management of any given tree, fruit can be available most of the year.

**Harvesting:** Fruit will generally have a green external colour, but are fully mature and ready to harvest. The best way to determine ripeness is to taste the fruit. Leave on the tree to ripen as long as required, as citrus does not continue to ripen once picked from the tree.



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