



**ACORN
NURSERY**

PLANTS - GIFTS - CAFE

TONY'S TIPS

JULY

THINGS TO DO IN JULY

- If you haven't pruned your roses do it ASAP. Almost any prune is better than no prune. Side dress roses with Seamungus to stimulate recovery. If you've had pest or disease issues in the last year spray over and around your pruned roses with Lime Sulphur; safe, low toxic and effective.
- I'm seeing lots of yellow Camellia and Citrus leaves being brought in. If not fed sufficiently in the Autumn then the plant is drawing nutrients out of older leaves to sustain flowering/fruitletting. Feed liberally with an organic based fertiliser now to prevent a skinny and miserable plant come Spring.
- Moss is invading lawns; loving the cool, moist conditions. As moss is iron intolerant sprinkle Sulphate of Iron or Moss and Clover Killer over a damp lawn, leave 24 hours for moss to go black, water in and then rake up the remnants. Safe for lawns but not for moss.
- Plant Pansies, Poppies, Cinerarias and Violas now for a colourful display in late Winter and through Spring. Liquid feed existing plantings with Charlie Carp/Powerfeed to stimulate growth and flowers.

PERFUMED PLANTS

Daphne is one of the all-time favourites and we have a number of different varieties including traditional Daphne odora. Covered in the most exquisitely fragrant flowers from now till Spring they are tougher than you'd think! Daphne hate wet feet so we always plant them up on a mound of improved soil in the shade of a tree or shrub to ensure good drainage, shade and an exposed collar. Great in a pot in good potting mix but never planted deeper than existing soil level and never tease the roots. Try also the larger growing, longer flowering Daphne Perfume Princess and the smaller, neater, sun loving Daphne Eternal Fragrance; able to flower 2-3 times a year. Boronia is also a favoured fragrant plant for those that can appreciate its perfume (I can't smell it but my wife loves it!) Again, it hates wet feet, likes good drainage, great in a pot or a raised garden bed, and prune by 40% after flowering. Allspice, Wintersweet or Chimonanthus is an unremarkable 2m shrub for most of the year but as its leaves fall its waxy yellow flowers emerge with the most delicious spicy perfume. Great as a cut flower to perfume your entire house! Osmanthus Heaven Scent and Pearly Gates are hardy 1.2m shrubs that are covered in small white fragrant flowers in the midst of Winter. Sweet Box aka Sarcococca is a small to medium glossy foliated shrub that can be hedged, grown in shade under vigorous trees and still produce masses of small white, sweetly fragrant flowers mid to late Winter. Good plant for difficult spots.

Magnolias are always one of the first signs that Spring is not far away. They start flowering in July and flower through to September and are valuable for their stunning display when all around is dormant. Magnolias have a few golden rules; always plant into organically improved soil up on a mound to ensure good surface drainage. Magnolias hate wet feet! We will have the best varieties from the best grower; white, cream, yellow, pink, purple and red flowered varieties.



CITRUS - THE MOST IMPORTANT GARDEN TREE

I firmly believe that the first tree you plant in any garden should be a citrus tree. They have so many positive attributes – glossy, exquisitely fragranced evergreen foliage, fragrant flowers and production of an attractive and incredibly useful fruit over an extended period. Whereas many other fruit trees have a short, sharp, intense fruiting period, many citrus have an extended fruiting period, and the best place to store fruit is on the tree! My Lisbon lemon tree is a pruned, bushy, chunky, attractive tree that has a summer and winter crop that almost meet in the spring and autumn. In the Autumn gap between the Summer and Winter crops I recommend you have a Tahitian Lime tree that fruit from late summer through to the winter and if in a good warm, sunny spot, will provide fruit when my lemon does not. I still love my lemon tree – 8 to 9 months of fruiting cannot be sneezed at – but I think I can now plug the gap with home grown limes. A long time ago a very experienced citrus grower of ours said that in Melbourne’s climate, Lisbon lemons fruited for a slightly longer time than Eureka. Eureka is favoured by some people because it is almost thornless (Lisbon has juvenile thorns which disappear as the tree becomes established). Meyer is a cross or hybrid with an orange and is a smaller, very attractive tree with sweeter, golden yellow fruit (big winter crop but small, sometimes negligible summer crop) and is ideal as a long term potted citrus or espalier in tight spaces. Meyer’s fruit well from an early age and are also available in a dwarf shrub variety called “Lemonicious” which is excellent in pots and tubs.



The rules to growing citrus are simple:

- 1) Sunny: at least half a day’s worth of sunshine.
- 2) Good drainage: hates wet and boggy spots so plant up on a mound adding lots of good compost (Zoo-Gro) to your soil to improve it or in a best quality potting mix in a large tub and never planting any deeper than it was in the pot.
- 3) Feed and water regularly: citrus are hard workers and need plenty of nutrients to sustain this strong growth rate and heavy fruiting.

Feed your citrus in early to mid-spring to help them recover from winter fruiting and encourage new spring growth. Feed again in late summer/early autumn with an organic based, high potash, complete fertiliser like the Grow Better Fruit & Citrus or All Purpose fertiliser. The high Potassium Osmocote is great for potted Citrus. Apply fertiliser in a circle around the tree – never against the trunk but around the edge of the foliage or at the edge of the pot. This is because the feeder roots aren’t near the trunk, but fanned out where they can catch the rain that drips off the foliage. As Citrus are hard workers therefore heavy feeders they need to be fed accordingly; you don’t give a brickies labourer a dry bickie for lunch, it won’t touch the sides! A substantial tree needs a substantial feed, kilos instead of handfuls.

Limes grow well in greater Melbourne – not too cold a winter and a nice warm summer to bring fruit on. Tahitian limes (A.K.A. Persian limes) will be a smaller, bushier tree than Lisbons or Eureka’s but can have long, eclectic, lateral branches which need to be pruned to encourage a more desirable bushy shape and better fruiting.

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The Tahitian lime can be picked green at the end of summer/early autumn and is considered ripe. Alternatively the fruit can be left to attain a lemon yellow (beyond lime) colouring at maximum maturity. As it colours it becomes juicier, but the juice becomes milder or sweeter in taste. This is true in most citrus; a lemon left on the tree becomes thicker skinned and sweeter as it matures. The other major lime that's grown here in Melbourne is the Kaffir lime, grown for the spectacularly scented foliage that is a vital ingredient in South East Asian cuisine. Kaffir limes do have useable fruit, but as they are lumpy and misshapen they are less popular than the sleek, smooth Tahitian limes. Suitable for pots, espaliers or in the garden, regular harvesting of the most fragrant tip growth will keep the plant beautifully bushy and chunky. We are also stocking a few warm climate limes (finger, Buddha etc.) that in the right position (sunny, well drained, protected from cold winds) are now having more success in our moderating climate.

Cumquats are less about edible fruit and more about the aesthetics. They are the most ornamental of the citrus: more naturally bushy, ideal in pots or tubs for a long time and can take poor treatment in their stride, still presenting their delightfully fragrant flowers and small, attractive fruits that can be eaten or preserved. I have a standard cumquat in a pot that is probably too small, in a spot that is probably too shady, but it still looks wonderful with regular feeding, watering and occasionally some Saturaid.

Oranges (Blood, Valencia and Navel), grapefruits and mandarins are all handsome trees that are worth growing if you like their fruit. Kids love the Imperial mandarin (sweet tasting with loose, easily peeled skin) but we also have a number of other varieties that will extend Mandarin availability right through into Spring. Mandarins have smaller leaves and can be pruned to create a pleasingly shaped tree in its own right, which also happens to also give desirable fruit.

The range of citrus is amazing – we are so fortunate to be able to grow them here. All our new season stock comes through in autumn, including our dwarf citrus. Dwarf citrus are normal varieties grafted onto a dwarfing rootstock (rather than one that promotes vigorous growth). This dwarfing rootstock means you get a smaller growing tree that is content to remain in a pot for the long term. All the most popular citrus will be available in dwarf varieties. Plant Citrus now to allow them to establish before Spring and be well established by Summer.

Citrus have few disease issues in Melbourne as long as they are planted properly; sunny, well drained, improved soil position with good feeding and watering. The main pest problems with Citrus are Citrus Gall Wasp, a small insignificant wasp that lays eggs in the new growth of Citrus in Spring causing "galls" or ugly lumps to develop in the stems. As the larvae will emerge as an adult from late August it is important to prune out all galls by mid-August to prevent reinfestation. Hanging Gall Wasp traps in mid-August can also trap a lot of invading wasps from neighbouring Citrus trees and prevent new infestations that mostly occur in the Spring. High Nitrogen, low Potassium fertilisers weaken the plants and make them more susceptible to attack whilst low soluble Nitrogen/high Potassium fertilisers reduce chances of infestation. Good nutrition promotes good plant health. The other insect problem which may occur is Citrus Leaf Minor which can cause distorted new growth in Summer and Autumn. Pest Oil applied once or twice will control this problem without affecting the fruit. Citrus are highly ornamental trees that have the bonus of valuable, desirable fruit over a long period.