

Rules and Exceptions

- **Plant deep.** Use a wide and deep container, either terra cotta or plastic. Citrus roots are fairly deep, so you'll need a fairly tall pot. Also, it is ideal for the potting mix to be slightly acidic.
- **Give your tree chilly nights.** A temperature between 50 to 55 degrees is ideal.
- **Provide as much light as possible.** Place in a south or southeast-facing window. If you don't have enough light, you can always add fluorescent or spotlights with full-spectrum lights. With modern insulated windows, put the plant pretty close to the window. If the window isn't insulated, back off a foot or two.
- **Maintain an evenly moist soil.** Don't treat citrus like other plants — that is, letting it dry out between waterings. Instead, keep it moist. During the winter, however, do not over water, or you'll get root rot, which is fairly common. When the soil is dry an inch below the surface, add water. Do not let water sit in the saucer below the container.
- **Keep the humidity high.** Citrus requires a humidity of 50 to 60 percent. Most households, however, measure only 20 percent during the winter. Misting daily is very important, and few people do that. Try to get in the habit of it. Maybe if you're fixing dinner, take a break and give it a spray. Group plants together to make it easier to keep humidity elevated, and set saucers of water around the plants.
- **Watch for pests.** The most likely are whiteflies and spider mites. Insecticidal soap controls virtually all the pests for houseplants and it's non-toxic
- **Fertilize lightly.** You have to be careful when fertilizing in winter. The citrus will have a slow growth rate anyway, so we'd suggest maybe once a month with a weak liquid fertilizer, diluted from a quarter to a third of what the manufacturer recommends.
- **Prune lightly when necessary.** If your tree becomes a little straggly or misshapen, you can cut all the way back to the main branch, or you can do just a little pinching to make it bushier.
- **Pretend you're a bee.** When Mother Nature isn't close at hand, you have to step in. To set fruit indoors, you'll have to hand pollinate these plants. Take a paintbrush, push it into a flower and move it onto the next flower, and so on and so on and so on.