Orange and Blood Orange

The following information on care of citrus applies to oranges and blood oranges:

**Planting:** Citrus trees that are purchased in fall or winter need to be kept in the pots until late March or when all danger of freeze has passed. Do not plant these trees before late March or they will very likely die in the winter freezes. Bring them into the garage or house if there is going to be a frost and take them back out after the frost. Plant them in an area that receives at least ½ day of sun. If possible, plant them on the south side of a house or building or where they will get a lot of protection from winter winds. Citrus do not require full sun as most other fruit trees, however the more sun the more production of fruit. Plant them in existing soil without amenities, and make sure the graft is a couple of inches above the soil line. Water every few days while in pots unless it rains. Test the soil in the pot by pushing your finger into the soil. If it is dry an inch down, it is time to water. When planted in the ground, water every day for a few days and then back off to once a week unless it rains.

**Fertilizing:** Do not fertilize the first spring, but you could fertilize with an organic fertilizer such as Microlife once during the first summer. In the next spring and summer, you can fertilize a couple of times.

**Care:** Citrus do not need to be pruned, but you could prune them if they get too big and in the way. And you can prune them on the top to keep them to a height for easy harvesting. You are likely to notice the new growth leaves start to curl. This is citrus leaf miner which is a leaf miner that affects the new leaves of most citrus. You can spray NEEM Oil on the new growth (both sides of leaves), and repeat a week later. This may stop the leaf miner, and it may not. The tree will still grow and produce even though the leaf miner attacks the leaves; but the tree will be more productive and healthier if the leaf miner is prevented.

**Cold Tolerance:** Some citrus have very good cold tolerance down to 22 degrees and some even to 10 degrees; but most can be damaged by freezes especially when they are young. In the first couple of years, if there is going to be a freeze, protect the plant by
covering with a blanket with a large bucket of water sitting right next to the plant and under the blanket. Also pile mulch or leaves around the base of the tree to protect the graft. In this way, if the tree freezes, it will come right back. After the freeze, remove the blanket and pull back the mulch or leaves. As the tree gets bigger, it is less sensitive to freezes. Some trees, like limes, are very sensitive to freezes and should be kept in pots and brought in if there is going to be a freeze.

**Harvesting:** Citrus ripen depending on the variety. Some like limes may produce several times during the year. Some satsumas produce as early as August and others as late as December. Oranges can ripen as early as November and some in January. Except for satsumas and some limes, all citrus will change color before they are ripe. You can taste when you think they are ripe and keep tasting on a weekly basis. You will soon learn what they taste like when ripe.

**Varieties of Oranges and Blood Oranges for the Houston Area Climate**

**Republic of Texas Orange** Documented back to 1847 near Angleton, Texas. Medium to large round orange. Very flavorful. Very cold tolerant. A sweet flavorful orange. Will grow to be a rather large tree. My three-year-old tree is already 10’ tall and has an upright posture. Best taste in early January.

**Cara Cara Pink Navel Orange** The color of the flesh is closer to that of a blood orange, the flavor had a hint of grapefruit with the typical excellent sweetness of a navel orange. Will withstand mild freezes but protect with a hard (26 degrees) freeze. Fully ripe in early December.

**Marrs Early Orange** A navel orange budsport relatively unknown outside Texas. It is commercially seedless, but seedy fruit can occur because of adjacent pollinizers. Marrs attains maturity in early October, sometimes in late September, primarily because of its low acidity. It bears heavy crops of very sweet medium fruit size but it exhibits a tendency to alternate bearing. It is grown for the fresh market.

**Moro Blood Orange** Most colorful of all the blood oranges. The exterior shows a bright red blush, and the internal color is deep red mixed with orange. The juice is equally dark, sweet and juicy. The fruits are medium-size, easy to peel and usually seedless. One of the most delicious of all oranges. Will withstand mild freezes but protect with a hard (26 degrees) freeze. Fully ripe in early December, but is very sweet weeks before.

**Sanguinelli Blood Orange** This unique orange has flesh that is purple rather than orange. Like other cultivars of "Sweet Orange," its growth rate is moderate making it perfect for containers. Flowers arrive in spring, which are followed by medium sized oranges that ripen in late winter. A gourmet citrus, the fruit has a distinctive flavor that's sweet. It is seedless with intense color.

**Ujukitsu Orange** A Japanese cross between an orange and lemon, with exceptionally tasty mild flavors. A unique tasting fruit that you will never forget, and you will keep coming back for more. This is the second year it is available for sale, and only at the Urban Harvest sale.

**Vainiglia Blood Orange** An acidless sweet orange with a pink flesh pigmented by lycopene, a carotenoid. The tree is small to medium-sized at maturity with a round form. The round fruit is medium in size, seedy, with a smooth orange rind of medium thickness. Because of its lack of acidity, the fruit can be eaten as early as late fall or early winter. The fruit is very juicy and is especially prized by Middle-Eastern people.
**Pineapple Orange** Matures in late November and holds into February. Fruit size, fruit quality and yields are a little better than Marrs. The fruit is seedy, having 15 to 20 seeds. It has a tendency to alternate year bearings.

**Jaffa Orange** An Israeli mid-season, seedless orange of medium size and excellent flavor. The favorite middle-east orange. Tends to alternate year bearing and needs to be picked when ripe for it does not store well on the tree.

**Tarocco Blood Orange** The largest of all the blood oranges. Ripens after 'Moro' but before 'Sanguinelli'. Tarocco is also generally considered the best-flavored of the three. Fruits are large and the orange-blushed-with-red rind is smooth, thin and easy to peel. Internal color varies: Sometimes it is plain orange; at other times it is very deep red. Most fruits produce a few seeds.

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