



Urban Harvest  
Gardening for good.

## Oranges, Blood Oranges, and Ujukitsus

Category:	Semi-evergreen
Hardiness:	Damage expected below 22° F
Fruit Family:	Citrus
Light:	Full sun to half day sun
Size:	15'H x 15'W average; varies by rootstock; may be pruned to desired HxW
Soil:	Well-drained
Planting:	Plant after danger of frost has passed, mid to late March

Oranges remain a favorite fruit. They can be enjoyed fresh, juiced, or used in cooking and preserving.

### Care of Orange and Blood Orange Trees

**Planting:** Newly purchased citrus have probably not been hardened off to tolerate our winter weather. Keep your citrus in the container until late March, or until all danger of freeze has passed. Trees can be kept outside in a sunny area on mild days and nights, but move them into the shelter of the garage or house if frost is predicted. You may take them back out after the frost. 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.



Citrus does not require full sun; however, the more sun the more production of fruit. Plant them in an area that receives at least ½ day of full sun. If you are more than 75 miles from the Gulf, plant them on the south side of a house or building or where they will get a lot of protection from winter winds. Plant them in existing soil without amendments, and make sure the graft scar at the base of the trunk is a couple of inches above the soil line. Water deeply after planting and apply an inch of compost and several inches of rotting leaves, keeping the mulch at least 12" away from the trunk of the tree. Water daily for a few days after planting, then weekly for the first summer if it does not rain.

**Pruning:** Citrus does not require pruning for production. Light pruning can be done in early spring after all danger of frost, but before the major spring growth spurt begins. Remove weak or damaged limbs and crossing branches that might rub together. Suckers, growth emerging below the graft, should be removed any time they are observed. Occasional thinning will help light penetrate the canopy. You can prune the top to keep them at a convenient height for harvesting and you can prune back anything that gets in the way.

**Production:** Grafted orange trees should bear harvestable fruit in the third year from planting. Fruit that forms in the first two years should be removed to direct all energy into the development of a strong root system and canopy growth.

**Watering:** All fruit trees should get consistent water in the first few years. Watering can come from rain or a hose. During the first year, if the soil under the mulch is dry, provide the tree with about 7 gallons of water per week, preferably once a week. Water slowly. This can be a little more than 3 minutes with a ½” hose and 1 ½ minutes with a 5/8” hose. Remember to account for rainfall when determining how much to water with a hose. Citrus should never have wet feet.

**Fertilizing:** Do not fertilize the first spring. You can begin fertilizing with a slow release organic fertilizer during the first summer’s growth. Apply 2 cups of cottonseed meal or slow release organic fertilizer per inch of trunk diameter in February and May each year.

**Harvesting:** Most oranges fall from the tree when fully ripe, but they are often very tasty much earlier. The only way to know is to try one. Navel oranges lack acidity so they are often good to eat in September, when their skin may still be green, and they will be excellent by late October. You can harvest them until January. Blood oranges are usually tastiest around early January, but the flesh gets deeper in color the later the cold weather lasts into February. Ujukitsus are ripe in late December.

**Pests:** If you notice the leaves on new growth starting to curl, it is most likely citrus leaf miner. This insect affects the new leaves of most citrus. You can spray Neem Oil or Spinosad on the new growth when it is the size of a mouse ear. Spray both sides of leaves, and repeat treatment every week to ten days. 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. Once the plant gets tall, you likely won’t see the damage. Many growers ignore this problem since it is largely cosmetic.

**Winter Protection:** Without protection, oranges on trifoliolate or flying dragon rootstock, and some others, can be expected to survive down to 22° F without damage. They will likely survive if they are exposed to temperatures lower than this for a few hours provided they have a fairly thick main trunk.

Pile mulch or leaves against the base to protect the graft if predictions exceed the safe temperature range. If the tree is small enough, tent the tree with a blanket or frost cloth. Do not “wrap” the tree. Protect trees less than two feet tall with a large plastic bin or cardboard box covered with a tarp. Prior to tenting or covering, place a bucket of water beside the trunk. Water gives off heat when it freezes. If you trap this heat inside the covering, it can keep the temperature inside the cover a few degrees higher. Suggested minimum temperatures are based on mature trees. Young trees are less hardy and require protection at higher temperatures.

### **Varieties of Orange for the 2016 Sale**

***Cara Cara Pink Navel, Marrs Early, Navel, Republic of Texas, Ujukitsu, Tarocco Blood, Vainiglia Sanguigno Blood***

### **Varieties of Orange for Southeast Texas**

**Cara Cara Pink Navel Orange:** The color of this navel orange flesh is closer to that of a blood orange, but the flavor has a hint of grapefruit with the typical excellent sweetness of a navel orange. It will withstand mild freezes but may not be as freeze hardy as ordinary oranges, so you may protect from a hard freeze below 26°. It is fully ripe in early December.



**Marrs Early Orange:** Marrs Early does not grow terribly large, but sets large quantities of very sweet, medium-sized fruit with low acidity. Marrs begins producing when relatively young, and the fruit is virtually seedless unless grown close to a pollenizer. Marrs attains maturity in early October, sometimes in late September, primarily because of its low acidity. Marrs is a navel orange budsport grown for the fresh market, but is relatively unknown outside Texas.

**Navel Orange:** Navels have a small growth at the flower end of the medium to large fruit that looks sort of like a human navel. Their long growing season makes them very popular. They have a meaty, fibrous, low acid flesh, a thick rind, and are easy to peel. Segments separate easily and are seedless. It is an attractive and heavily bearing tree with fruit ripening in October. Hardy to at least 22° F.

**Republic of Texas Orange:** This has been claimed to be similar to the first citrus grown in Texas. The story goes that it was grafted from a very old tree found in the Santa Fe area, between Houston and Galveston, dating back to 1847, but efforts to verify this have proved fruitless. As a survivor of many bad freezes, it is quite hardy. More importantly, the fruit is very sweet, juicy, highly flavorful and slightly seedy. It's also a very heavy producer. The mature size on trifoliolate rootstock averages 15' x 15' if not pruned. Best taste in early January. It is hardy to at least 22° F.

**Moro Blood Orange:** The most colorful of all the blood oranges in our area. The exterior shows a bright red blush, and the internal color is an antioxidant-rich orange mixed with deep red in early January and purple maroon in late January to February in cool winters. The juice is equally dark, sweet and juicy—possibly one of life's great joys - and it is one of the most delicious of all oranges. It is rivaled only by the 'Tarroco Blood Orange'. The fruits are medium-sized, and seedless or few-seeded. It is fully ripe in December, but tastes best in January. Juicy, medium sized fruit with a very distinctive aroma. It bears its fruit in clusters near the end of its branches. Tends to bear heavily in alternate years. On trifoliolate roots, it will withstand freezes to 22° F or lower.

**Ujukitsu:** A sweet, very tasty, mild, heirloom Japanese orange with a lemon-yellow skin and a pear shaped fruit. This is a unique tasting fruit that you will never forget. The tree is gorgeous when it is full of ripe, yellow fruits. It has a slightly weeping habit, but can be pruned into a nice canopy. Most likely, its heritage is a complex mix of yuzu, mandarin, and a hardy pummelo. Until the late sixteenth century, all oranges were probably yellow skinned. Like all the gourmet Japanese, heirloom citrus – 'Bloomsweet' grapefruits/Kinkoji, Satsuma tangerines, 'Hirado' pummelo, Yuzu lemons, and 'Meiwa' kumquats – 'Ujukitsu' is very cold hardy, and will tolerate temperatures in the lower twenties if not teens.

**Tarocco Blood Orange:** Medium to large fruit with a smooth, thin, orange rind, sometimes with a red blush. It produces rich-flavored fruit with overtones of berry! This is one of the finest tasting oranges. Internal red color may vary from year to year. This orange is sweet, easy to peel and has few seeds.

**Vainiglia Sanguigno Blood Orange:** A nearly acid free sweet orange with a pink flesh pigmented by lycopene. 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 in the Mediterranean and Southwest Asia.