

CITRUS CARE IN AUTUMN

The trees have gone through a tough summer so autumn is a good time for some TLC.

Most citrus will now have fruit approaching maturity so it is important to make sure they have regular (not frequent) water. A good soaking once a week is sufficient. March/April is a good time to fertilise. Specific citrus fertiliser is available but chicken manure type pellets together with blood and bone are more beneficial to soil organisms. Remember that the feeder roots are under the outer leaves, called the dripline, so direct water and fertiliser there. Try to avoid watering the trunk and keep mulch from direct contact with trunk to avoid collar rot. Top up mulch if necessary.

Some pests to look out for are -

- leaf miner on new growth, indicated by a silvery trail which is caused by larvae tunnelling in the leaf tissue, causing the leaves to contort. At first sign, white or eco oil can be sprayed on leaves, as this discourages the moth from laying it's eggs. If damage is significant, cut off the leaves.

- Fruit fly can still be around and will especially attack grapefruit so put out bait traps or lures. It is required by law to control this pest.

- Caterpillars of small citrus butterfly. Eggs are laid on tips of new growth and hatch into caterpillars, which can destroy large amounts of foliage. Pick off or spray with Dipel.

Yellowing leaves can be a sign of mineral deficiency. Citrus are heavy feeders and nutrients can be leached out of the soil by heavy rain. Acid soil is common in this area and low soil pH can also lead to mineral deficiency. If in doubt, check soil pH and if below 6, add some lime around the dripline.

GROWING GARLIC

Garlic is really easy to grow. It needs full sun, good drainage, water and fertiliser. Bulbs can be sourced on-line or from growers markets. Don't use the imported varieties in some supermarkets as they have been fumigated to enter the country!

Planting is best done in March/April after the worst heat has gone. "Hill up" the soil in rows and plant cloves about 15 cm apart in damp soil. Mulch well. Once leaves have appeared apply fertiliser beside rows and again in September. Keep damp but not wet. Leaves will start to dry off in about November and once 2 thirds have died, the plants should be ready to dig up. Try not to water within a week of harvest. Place on racks and when leaves are dry, cut them off and store bulbs in onion bags or tie in bunches and hang in an airy place in the shade. Make sure to save some for planting next year.