



**Hillermann's
Kids' Club**

Growing Citrus Trees

Citrus plants are slow to grow, but even when small they're appealing, with glossy, oversize leaves topping slender "trunks." And given a modest amount of TLC, they can develop into lovely indoor trees, growing very tall, and producing an annual display of delicate white blossoms and even fruit of their own.

MATERIALS:

- A selection of citrus fruits—oranges, lemons, tangerines and grapefruit
- Peat pots
- Soilless potting mix
- Ziptop baggies
- Houseplant fertilizer

You should also keep some 6-inch terra cotta pots on hand for later transplanting.

WHEN PLANTING:

Fill each peat pot almost to the top with soilless potting mix, and then add water until the mix is moist throughout. In each pot, press three or four pits of the same type about 1/4 inch into the mix, making sure that they're well covered. Slip each pot into a ziptop bag, labeling it to avoid confusion. If possible, place the bags near a source of heat (the radiator in winter, or a warm corner in summer). As soon as sprouts appear, remove the pot from the bag and set it on a sunny windowsill.



DAYS TO SPROUTING:

On average, citrus seeds take about 14 days to sprout. Try not to lose patience (though after six weeks, you might unearth a few seeds to make sure that they haven't rotted).

LONG-TERM CARE:

When the plants have produced two sets of leaves, choose the strongest seedling in the pot and remove the others. This is also the time to start feeding with a soluble houseplant fertilizer diluted to half strength. Continue to keep your citrus plant moist. When roots begin to protrude through the peat pots, transplant the entire pot and seedling into the terra-cotta container (the plant's roots thus remain undisturbed; the peat pot eventually degrades).

Hillermann
NURSERY & FLORIST

636-239-6729 • www.hillermann.com
2601 E. 5th Street • Washington, MO 63090

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