

Many Arizona gardeners and homeowners love the beauty and fresh fruit that citrus trees bring to their yards. When choosing which type to plant, it's smart to think about space, how much fruit you'd like, and any Community or city restrictions that might apply.

Dwarf Citrus Trees

Dwarf citrus trees are perfect for pots, patios, or smaller yards. They're usually 25% to 50% smaller than their standard counterparts, though the exact size can vary depending on the rootstock, soil, and growing conditions. Even though the trees are smaller, the fruit is not — an orange from a dwarf tree is the same size as an orange from a standard tree. The main difference is the yield. Dwarf trees produce fewer fruits overall, which can be either a perk (less fruit to manage) or a drawback (not enough for use). Another advantage? Their compact size makes them easier to prune, water, and harvest. With their bushier, shrub-like appearance, dwarf citrus can also fit neatly into a landscape design or even serve as a decorative accent in a container.

Standard Citrus Trees

Standard-size citrus trees usually grow 12 to 20 feet tall, depending on the variety and growing conditions. For example, sweet orange trees tend to fall in the middle of that range. Left unpruned, citrus trees naturally grow more like large shrubs, with branches extending down to the ground. However, many homeowners prefer pruning them into a tree-like form with a visible trunk, which adds structure, health, and overall value. Standard trees yield more fruit than dwarf trees, but reaching the top branches can be tricky when harvesting — you may need a fruit picker.



Dwarf citrus tree



How to Tell the Difference

It can sometimes be tricky to distinguish between a dwarf citrus and a young standard tree. A good clue is the growth habit: dwarf trees tend to look more compact, with thicker trunks in proportion to their height. Standard trees, by contrast, often appear looser and more "wispy," with thinner trunks at the same height.

Citrus Care Tips

- Dwarf trees in containers dry out faster than those in the ground. In Arizona's climate, you may need to water potted trees every few days during summer, while in-ground trees usually do well with a deep soak once a week. Always check soil moisture 2–3 inches down before watering. If it's still damp, hold off.
- Standard trees benefit from deeper, less frequent watering. A slow, thorough soak at the root zone encourages roots to grow downward, making the tree more drought-tolerant in the long run.
- Any fruit left on the ground (or hanging past its prime on the tree) can attract pests like roof rats, a common issue in Arizona neighborhoods with lots of citrus. To help prevent infestations, collect fallen fruit regularly and remove all remaining fruit at the end of the season.

Source:

[Citrus Reference Guide](#) – The University of Arizona Cooperative Extension

