Growing Dwarf Lemon Trees in Pots

Growing dwarf lemon trees in pots is a great way to have lemons at your disposal right at your back door. You don’t need a large backyard just a small patio where you can place the lemon tree in the sun will do.

If you live in a dry climate growing dwarf lemon trees in pots is a great option as they take less water. If your lemon trees are struggling to produce great tasting lemons give dwarf lemons a try.

There are several different varieties of dwarf lemon trees available with the most popular being the Meyer lemon. This variety is slightly sweeter than the traditional lemon trees.

Trees can be purchased from your local garden centre or online. The tree may be a little smaller online but you can make savings purchasing plants direct from the wholesaler.

When the tree arrives water it well then give it a few days to recover and acclimatise. Keep the plant undercover at night if you are having frosts.

How to Pot Up Dwarf Lemon Trees

There are two ways of potting up lemon trees and it is really down to personal preference depending on the amount of time you have.

To get the fastest growth it is best to pot up a lemon tree slowly using slightly larger pots each time. This means you will need to pot up more often but the tree will grow quicker.

The second method is to pot the tree into its final position in a large pot. It may take longer to grow but you won’t need to worry about potting it up again.

Tools and Materials Needed

Plastic Pots from 15cm (6 inch) to 30cm (12 inch) and Saucer to match for method one or 1 Large Pot 35cm to 40cm (14 inch to 16 inch) in diameter for the second method.

Potting Mix

Citrus Slow Release Fertiliser

Method

First prepare the new pot by placing potting mix in the bottom with 1 tablespoon of slow release fertiliser mixed in.
Water the dwarf lemon tree well then take the centre stem at the base with one hand and slowly wriggle the pot off from the root ball. Place in the new pot with the soil line just below the top of the pot.

Fill in potting mix around the tree then firm down. Water well then keep moist for the next week.

If you are using the first method of potting up the tree slowly you will need to judge when the best time is to pot up into the next sized pot. It is usually after you have new growth and the roots are growing out of the bottom of the pot.

Caring for Dwarf Lemon Trees in Pots

The roots of lemon trees like to be kept cool. Some dark coloured ceramic pots can stress the plant if sitting in the hot sun for long periods. You can combat this by placing the pot in an area that gets the morning sun and afternoon shade.

Dwarf lemon trees are frost tolerant and prefer the full sun. As they are in pots it is easy to find the best position in the garden for your tree.

Large pots should never be lifted on your own unless you have a moving trolley. Just slide it under the pot then carefully tip it back but not too far or the soil may come out of the pot.

Pots will need to be watered regularly. Once a week in the winter and every two days in the hottest part of the summer. Make sure the entire pot is saturated with water and have a saucer underneath.

Wait until the soil feels dry before watering again as the roots don’t like to be constantly water logged.

Fertilising Dwarf Lemon Trees

Use a slow release fertiliser every six months in the spring and autumn (fall) which is specifically for citrus trees. There are other slow release fertilizers on the market which require more frequent application and they tend to get better results as citrus trees like their food. Otherwise try supplementing the longer release fertilisers with a regular dosing of liquid fertiliser.

Save your egg shells, wash them out then leave to dry in a windowsill. Grind them up in a processor then sprinkle around the base of the plant. This acts as a slow release calcium additive which is beneficial to all citrus trees.

Pruning Dwarf Lemon Trees

It is best not to prune a dwarf lemon tree. It may be tempting especially when you have one long branch that grows out beyond the rest but it is best to leave it alone. The rest of the plant will catch up.

If a branch breaks off in strong winds use a sharp pair of pruners to cut the branch off cleanly below the break. Cut at an angle so the water will run off the cut. This will help to prevent disease.
Diseases and Insects Affecting Lemon Trees

Some aphids, caterpillars, mites and scale insects will attack the leaves. White oil or a natural thistle spray will help to control these insects if they become a problem. These bugs cause sooty mould fungus which turns the leaves black. This can only be eliminated by controlling the bugs.

Other fungal problems can be controlled by spraying a copper fungicide. Fungal diseases can cause the leaves to change colour and drop. Some also cause problems with the bark of the tree and will stain the fruit.

Keep an eye on your tree while watering and if you notice any infestations or changes in the leaves spray with the appropriate spray. If using a commercial product always follow its directions.

Tip

Dwarf lemon trees are easy to grow and take care of. They are a must for every garden no matter how small. This is a great option for drought affected areas as they will thrive in the pots no matter how much natural rainfall you get as long as you remember to water them regularly.