

Staying at Home Doesn't Have to Mean Staying Inside

Citrus Tree Gardening Tips for National Gardening Month

For many Californians, gardening is a relaxing outdoor activity that helps clear the mind, while adding beauty to their yards. April is National Gardening Month, and while we're all practicing social distancing at home, it's a great opportunity to get some fresh air and give your yard some TLC. In California, we have many different types of beautiful plants, and our bright and fragrant fruit trees are not only delicious to eat but are also a wonderful part of our state's tradition – now, about 6 in 10 California residences have a citrus tree on the property.

Pass the time by practicing your green thumb with these tips:

- Since we have a bit more time on our hands lately, now is a good time to inspect your citrus trees for pests and diseases. It's extremely important to look for signs and symptoms of the deadly and incurable citrus tree disease, **Huanglongbing (HLB)**, which can be spread by a pest called the **Asian citrus psyllid**. Symptoms of HLB include blotchy, yellowing leaves; fruit drop; asymmetrical blotchy and yellowing leaves, premature and excessive fruit drop, lopsided fruit, and bitter, rancid-tasting fruit. Call the state's pest hotline at **800-491-1899** if disease symptoms are seen on your tree. For photos and to learn more about HLB and the psyllid visit: californiacitrusthreat.org/pest-disease/.
- Apply products to treat your tree for the Asian citrus psyllid. This is the best way to stop HLB – stop the pest that can spread the disease. The University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources has a helpful list of recommendations: ucanr.edu/sites/ACP/Homeowner_Options/.
- Your nutritious backyard citrus can serve as a kind neighborly gift while we practice social distancing. Be sure to wash your fruit thoroughly and remove any leaves/stems before sharing to limit the spread of the Asian citrus psyllid and HLB. Additionally, if you choose to prune your citrus tree as part of your tree care, dry out the citrus tree clippings or double bag them before disposing plant material to avoid inadvertently spreading the pest to new areas.
- Home and garden centers can also give advice on pest management and nutrients for your citrus tree. Some home and garden centers may still be open. Try calling ahead to see if a retailer near you is still open – they may offer delivery or pick-up options while limiting in-person interaction.
- Allow agricultural officials to continue to inspect citrus trees in order to protect our community's citrus. The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) is still hard at work ensuring a safe and secure food supply. If you live in an area where HLB is present, you may receive a letter from CDFA explaining the inspections that may be happening in your neighborhood. They will first leave a letter that gives an optional timeframe to allow them to inspect citrus trees on your property, then come back during the scheduled time to inspect and/or treat citrus trees as needed. **Their primary focus is to protect your citrus tree and the community's citrus trees.** Please allow them to access your property and call the free statewide pest hotline with any questions: 800-491-1899.

Tending to your garden can be a great way to get outside and provide a literal breath of fresh air to your new routine. Plus, your citrus trees will thank you for it!

Learn more about citrus tree care tips at CaliforniaCitrusThreat.org.

