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*Please DO NOT use Genetically Modified Seeds(GM or GMO). Ask your seed provider and if they cannot give you written proof, do not buy the seed.*

*Try to save your own seed that you know is safe and you will get more money for your vegetables if they are organically grown, which means no pesticide use for the previous 5 years.*

## How to Grow Lime Tree

Days to germination:

Seedlings are more typically planted:

Days to harvest: 3 years Light requirements: Full sun Water requirements: Regular watering Soil: Well-drained and even sandy soils Container: Suitable in dwarf varieties

### **Introduction**

Like most citrus fruit trees, you'll need a warm climate with mild winters in order to successfully grow a lime tree. You should be in zones 9 to 11, though sheltered areas of zones 8 or even 7 may be suitable. The most popular varieties are Kaffir, Key and Meyer's limes.

The leaves from the Kaffir lime tree are actually edible and are often used in Asian and Thai cooking.

Limes aren't particularly loaded with vitamins or minerals, but contain nearly half a day's supply of vitamin C in just a quarter cup of juice. These fruits are notable for that, as they were used to fend off scurvy in British sailors at sea. The nickname "Limey" is still used today.

Like the lemon, limes are most often used as a flavoring rather than as a fruit you eat on its own.

## **Starting Your Tree**

Lime trees are not particularly huge, and will usually grow to around 12 feet high at maturity. Plant your sapling or young tree in a sunny location with the best drainage you can find. Any spot where water accumulates should be passed by.

Plant the tree like any other, making sure that the hole is large enough for the roots. Once planted, tamp down the soil around the tree but don't pack it down tightly. You still need great drainage, and packed soil doesn't help.

Planting during late fall will give your tree some time to put down roots before the hot dry summer climate.

Most lime varieties are self-fertile, meaning you only need one tree in order to get a successful fruit harvest.

## **Tree Care**

A few months after the blossoms have fallen, you will start to see fruit developing. Any clusters of small limes that have more than 4 fruits in each should be reduced down to 2 or 3 limes in a group or you will end up with a large harvest of tiny fruit. There is no hard and fast rule to this, but a little thinning can go a long way.

Given its small size, the lime tree seldom needs much pruning so there isn't a lot of work in that regard. Each spring, check for dead branches and cut them out and also remove any suckers growing out of the trunk. They look like green branches but they grow straight upwards. You can't miss them. Smaller branches growing through the center of the tree can also be pruned to let more light get through the crown of the tree. That's really all you need to do with a lime tree with regards to keeping it pruned.

Water your tree if you have had dry weather for several days, with a good drink about once a week when necessary. Don't over-soak all at once though. Give them a dose of citrus fertilizer 2 or 3 times a year, or more if the soil isn't very fertile on its own.

## **Containers**

Dwarf varieties of lime will do best in a container, which usually means a standard lime that has been grafted onto a different rootstock to keep it small. If you can't get a dwarf lime, you may be fine with a standard tree since they are fairly small to begin with.

For a container, you'll need at least a half barrel sized pot or planter. You can even grow potted limes in cooler climates

as long as you are able to bring the whole tree indoors during the winter. A very sunny indoor room should be sufficient and you can still get lime production as long as you put the plant back outdoors during the warmer months.

## **Pests and Diseases**

Lime suffers from attack by the same pests as most other citrus trees: aphids, scale insects and leafminers.

Aphids and scale are more of a nuisance than anything else, but if they are in large enough numbers or you have a very young tree, they can be a problem. Both insects suck out the fluid from inside the plant, and they excrete a sweet "honeydew" as a result. This will attract ants and can also lead to mold or mildew on your trees.

Once these pests start to accumulate, you can use a hose to spray them off (this works best for aphids) or use dish soap and water mixture. Scale can be hard to get rid of because their tough shell makes them pretty well protected against most sprays. But as long as they are not harming the plant, don't stress about getting every last one off.

Leafminers are a bit different, and they chew on the leaves to cause real damage to your tree. Look for little tunnels or tracks in the leaf as the main symptom. Again, try soapy water and you should cut away leaves and branches that show a lot of tunneling and burn them.

## **Harvest and Storage**

Lime trees will start to fruit at 3 years old, though you will get just a handful of limes at that age.

Unlike most other citrus fruits, limes are picked before they ripen to get the best flavor. Green limes do turn yellow if left on the tree, so you want to pick the fruit before that happens. Once ripe, it will be bitter.

Unfortunately, it can be tricky to know the right point to pick your fruit because any that are too immature will be poor as well. After a few years, you will likely learn how to tell but the best way is to just cut down a couple of limes and see how juicy they are. Ready-to-pick fruit should be juicy, and the skins will be lighter green than the younger fruit.

You can store whole limes in the fridge for about 2 weeks if you put them in a plastic bag. If you just want the juice for drinks and cooking, that can be frozen and stored for several months. Ice cube trays work very well, then you can just store the loose cubes in freezer bags.