

Tahitian Lime

Botanical Name: Citrus latifolia (Rutaceae)

Common Name: Tahitian Lime, Persian or Bearss Lime

Origin: The Tahitian lime is believed to be a native to the old Persian region of the middle east and was possibly transported to Brazil in the mid 1800's via Australia where it was reported as growing since 1824. It is believed that the Persian lime was introduced to the USA via Tahiti, hence one of its three common names.

Distribution: Is now throughout the world with major producers in the USA, Brazil, Israel, and an increasing production in Australia.

Australian Distribution: There are extensive orchards of Tahitian limes planted in the top end. The Northern Territory is a major supplier to interstate markets. Other growing regions are North Queensland, Northern NSW and Northern WA.

Preferred Climate and Soil Types: As with other citrus trees and shrubs, limes need full sun and good soil drainage. In heavy soils that are slow to drain, trees should be planted on slight mounds with a good compost mixture and freely draining soil. Lime trees cannot tolerate cold temperatures.

Description: The Tahitian lime tree is moderately vigorous, 2.5-3 metres, thornless, seedless, juicy and extremely acidic with widespread, drooping branches. The fruits are round in shape and have a diameter of between 4-6 centimetres.

Varieties: There have been only a few named cultivars, or alleged cultivars, of the Tahitian lime including 'Bearss', and 'Idemor'

Culture: Limes require a well drained soil to ideally 600mm and slightly mounded so that the water does not pond around the stem and cause stem rot. Allow for a canopy diameter of 4.5 – 5 metres, keep away from large established trees and palms as citrus does not like competition. When small, water every two days, when established, deep water twice weekly. Prune to remove dead branches, low foliage and open central canopy to allow light so as to limit fungal diseases. Also prune out any laterals below the graft.

When young fertilise lightly every 2-3 months. Once established fertilise generously at the end of March/early April and again at fruit set. Citrus require a zinc foliar spray at the new flush once a year.

Pests and Diseases: Citrus Canker, Californian red scale, mites and leaf miner.

Fruiting Season: October to March is the main fruiting season. But can have minor cropping at other times.

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Harvesting: Tahitian limes remain green and are fully ripe when the peel becomes a lighter green and a smooth surface. Unripe fruit are dark green with a course peel. Overripe fruit are yellow and lose flavour.

Fruit is used fresh but is unsuitable for commercial lime cordial. They are used for a variety of culinary purposes, particularly drinks, curries, cakes and desserts.



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