Citrus

By Therese Gustin

Years ago, on a visit to Tucson, I discovered a fabulous treat right outside my sister's back door...oranges and grapefruits. Living in Oregon, I wished I could have that same access to fresh picked lemons, limes and oranges. Even though our winters are relatively mild, they are still too cold to grow citrus year-round in the ground. That's not to say we can't grow citrus in the Pacific Northwest. This ready supply of vitamin C can be grown in containers right on your patio or deck.

I bought a Meyer's lemon several years ago and discovered not only did it produce year-round fruit, but it is also a terrific plant. At any given time my lemon is in bloom giving off a heady fragrance, budding out and heavily laden with ripe fruit! One year I harvested 30 lemons off my three foot tree. I've heard that Meyer's lemons can handle temperatures down to freezing, but I prefer not to take a chance. When the temperature drops below 40 degrees, I move my lemon into my greenhouse. If you don't have a greenhouse, it can be moved to a sunny location inside the house. It's common for the leaves of citrus to drop, but don't worry, they will grow back.

I've since added a Bearss lime and tangelo to my collection and would like to try a blood orange and grapefruit. I have an occasional bout with spider mites and scale and found success controlling them with insecticidal soap. I also fertilize a couple times a year with citrus fertilizer. Citrus trees in containers remain relatively small, usually under five feet which makes them a perfect candidate for placement on a deck or patio. Just remember to water them well during hot dry periods.

Over the last few years, citrus plants have become more and more available to the home gardener. Portland Nursery on Division St. has a large and unique selection of citrus and Al's Garden Centers carry great varieties like Meyer's Improved lemons, Bearss limes, oranges and kumquats. You may want to call first for their availability. You can also order citrus trees from **www.onegreenworld.com.**

If your citrus trees are prolific and you are looking for more to do than enjoy their fresh, sweet and tart juices, here is a great recipe to try.

Citrus...*continued*

Lemon Curd
[Makes about 2 cups.]

Ingredients:
3 oz. (6 Tbs.) unsalted butter,
softened at room temperature
1 cup sugar
2 large eggs
2 large egg yolks
2/3 cup fresh lemon juice
1 tsp. grated lemon zest

Directions:
In a large bowl, beat the butter and sugar with an electric mixer, about 2 min. Slowly add the eggs and yolks. Beat for 1 min. Mix in the lemon juice. The mixture will look curdled, but it will smooth out as it cooks.

In a medium, heavy-based saucepan, cook the mixture over low heat until it looks smooth. (The curdled appearance disappears as the butter in the mixture melts.) Increase the heat to medium and cook, stirring constantly, until the mixture thickens, about 15 min. It should leave a path on the back of a spoon and will read 170°F on a thermometer. Don't let the mixture boil.

Remove the curd from the heat; stir in the lemon zest. Transfer the curd to a bowl. Press plastic wrap on the surface of the lemon curd to keep a skin from forming and chill the curd in the refrigerator. The curd will thicken further as it cools. Covered tightly, it will keep in the refrigerator for a week and in the freezer for 2 months.

[Recipe from Fine Cooking.]