

New Citrus Varieties

Fort Bend County Master Gardeners

Fruit Tree Sale, February 9, 2019

Written by Deborah Birge, Fort Bend County Master Gardener

Citrus is one of the most sought-after fruit trees for residents of Fort Bend County. Nothing is more intoxicating than a tree full of orange or lemon blossoms. Nothing more inviting than a tree full of tasty oranges or satsumas ready for the picking. Citrus can be cold hardy needing little winter care or very cold sensitive needing protection from temperatures below 40 degrees. Choosing the variety for your particular needs and interest can be accomplished by understanding the many varieties and their properties.

Fort Bend County Master Gardeners will be offering several new citrus varieties at the Annual Fruit Tree Sale, February 9, 2019. We have a new pommelo, lime, three mandarins, and a grapefruit. This article will discuss each to help you in your decisions.

Australian Finger Lime



The Australian finger lime is described as Citrus Caviar. These small cucumber-shaped limes are practically in a category all their own. Their aromatic skin appears in a triad of colors and the flesh holds caviar-shaped vesicles that pop crisply in your mouth with an assertively tart punch. The tree is a small-leaved understory plant with some thorns. The tough climate conditions of the Australian coastal regions where Finger Limes were first grown make it suitable for a diversity of planting locations with little care or maintenance. It will even tolerate cooler weather down to a brief frost. Its compact, almost hedge-like stature make it an excellent candidate for tight spots in the garden or throughout the landscape.

Kinkoji Grapefruit



This grapefruit is also known as the Bloomsweet and is a heritage fruit from Japan. Bloomsweet, or Kinkoji, is a hybrid cross of pommelo X mandarin. The tree bears huge clusters of large yellow grapefruit-like fruit, but without the bitterness typical of grapefruit. The fruits are large sweet and mild. The tree is reported to be cold-hardy down to the mid-teens after maturity.

Valentine Pommelo



The Valentine pommelo is a newly-developed Citrus maxima hybrid. PommelOs are also called pumelos, Chinese grapefruits, and Shaddocks. Its parentage is a Dancy mandarin x Ruby blood orange hybrid x "Siamese Sweet" pomelo, resulting in a sweet taste, red flesh, and complex flavor. The fruit's juicy sweet red pigmentation is also a sign that the variety is loaded with beneficial antioxidants. The name was derived from its heart-shape when viewed from end to stem. Additionally, it ripens in early February in California. This tree is reported to be hardy to mid-20s with maturity.

Page Mandarin



An early ripening, high quality variety, the Page Mandarin has considerable resemblance to a very juicy and sweet orange, with a balanced acidity. It originated from a Minneola tangelo (tangerine X grapefruit) X Clementine mandarin cross made by Gardner and Bellows of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1942. The tree is moderately vigorous; branches upright, spreading under the weight of fruit, nearly thornless and productive.

Kinnow Mandarin



This high-quality variety is a sister to Wilking, both resulting from a King-Willowleaf (Mediterranean) mandarin cross made in 1915 by H. B. Frost (1935) of the University of California Citrus Research Center, Riverside, California, and named and released in 1935. Kinnow has been distributed widely and is currently grown commercially to some extent in California, Arizona, West Pakistan, and India. It is the most widely grown mandarin in Pakistan. The tree is vigorous and large, tall and columnar, with numerous long, slender, ascending, and virtually thornless branches. Flesh color is deep yellowish-orange. It is very juicy. The flavor is rich, aromatic, and distinctive.

All these varieties can be an added bonus to your backyard. Come to the Fruit Tree Sale, February 9, 2019, at the George Pavilion at Fort Bend County Fairgrounds from 9am - noon and the Fruit Tree Sale Preview February 2, 2019, at the Bud O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Road, Rosenberg from 9am -11am.