

Citrus

Harvesting

Normally the bearing starts from 4th year onwards. However, the commercial yield can be obtained from 6th year onwards. Maturity of citrus fruits depends upon the climatic condition, scion-rootstock and management practices. The period of maturity is shortest in lime (5-6 months), longest in mandarins and sweet oranges (9-10 months) which is further influenced by heat and moisture.

The maturity in sweet orange (*Citrus sinensis*) is indicated by the change of the skin colour from dark green to light yellow. The outer skin get shiny appearance and the oil glands are visible. The hard texture of the rind becomes softer on maturity.

Mandarin orange (*Citrus reticulata*) is harvested when 75% of fruit surface colour changes from dark green to yellowish orange.

Limes (*Citrus aurantifolia*) **and lemons** (*Citrus limon*) are harvested when the colour of the skin changes from dark green to yellowish green.

However, in all citrus fruits apart from the colour the TSS: acid ratio should also be considered.

Normally the citrus fruits are harvested when ripe, as their quality does not improve on storage. Clippers or secateurs should be used to remove the fruit from the tree leaving a little portion of the stem attached to the fruit. Fruit should not be pulled by hand, as it ruptures the skin of the fruit and provides an entry point for field diseases. The harvested fruits should be placed in picking bags or plastic buckets and transferred to a shady place or packing house.

Yield

A well maintained sweet orange orchard yields 600-800 fruits/plant/year from 8th year onwards, while that of Nagpur Mandarin of same age yields 800-1000 fruits/plant /year. In case of lime, a seven year old lime plant yields 1000-1200 fruits/year.