

Urban Harvest
Gardening for good.

Kumquats

Category:	Semi-evergreen
Hardiness:	Slight damage expected below 18° F
Fruit Family:	Citrus
Light:	Full sun to half day sun
Size:	8'H x 8'W average; varies by rootstock; may be pruned to desired HxW
Soil:	Well-drained
Planting:	Plant after danger of frost has passed, mid to late March

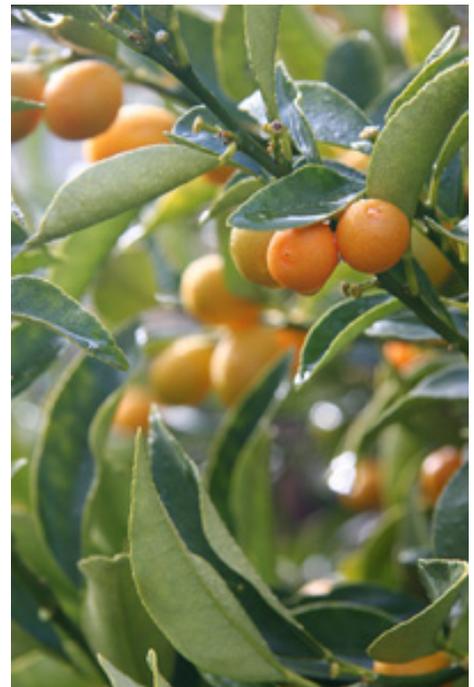
Kumquats are the smallest of the citrus trees. They are well suited to small gardens, make a nice hedge, and can be grown in containers long term. Kumquats can be eaten fresh, used in cooking and preserves. The skin is sweet and aromatic.

Care of Kumquat Trees

Planting: Newly purchased citrus have probably not been hardened off to tolerate our winter weather. Keep your citrus in the container until late March, or until all danger of freeze has passed. Trees can be kept outside in a sunny area on mild days and nights, but move them into the shelter of the garage or house if frost is predicted. You may take them back out after the frost. Water every few days while in pots unless it rains. Test the soil in the pot by pushing your finger into the soil. If it is dry an inch down, it is time to water.

Citrus does not require full sun; however, the more sun the more production of fruit. Plant them in an area that receives at least ½ day of full sun. If you are more than 75 miles from the Gulf, plant them on the south side of a house or building or where they will get a lot of protection from winter winds. Plant them in existing soil without amendments, and make sure the graft scar at the base of the trunk is a couple of inches above the soil line. Water deeply after planting and apply an inch of compost and several inches of rotting leaves, keeping the mulch at least 12" away from the trunk of the tree. Water daily for a few days after planting, then weekly for the first summer if it does not rain.

Pruning: Citrus does not require pruning for production. Light pruning can be done in early spring after all danger of frost, but before the major spring growth spurt begins. Remove weak or damaged limbs and crossing branches that might rub together. Suckers, growth emerging below the graft, should be removed any time they are observed. Occasional thinning will help light penetrate the



canopy. You can prune the top to keep them at a convenient height for harvesting and you can prune back anything that gets in the way.

Production: Kumquats will often have flowers and fruits when they are purchased in containers. This fruit should be removed. Grafted kumquat trees should bear harvestable fruit in the third year from planting. Fruit that forms in the first two years should be removed to direct all energy into the development of a strong root system and canopy growth.

Watering: All fruit trees should get consistent water in the first few years. Watering can come from rain or a hose. During the first year, if the soil under the mulch is dry, provide the tree with about 7 gallons of water per week, preferably once a week. Water slowly. This can be a little more than 3 minutes with a ½" hose and 1 ½ minutes with a 5/8" hose. Remember to account for rainfall when determining how much to water with a hose. Citrus should never have wet feet.

Fertilizing: Do not fertilize the first spring. You can begin fertilizing with a slow release organic fertilizer during the first summer's growth. Apply 2 cups of cottonseed meal or slow release organic fertilizer per inch of trunk diameter in February and May each year.

Harvesting: Kumquats flower in early summer and ripen between December and March. They should not be eaten until they are fully orange and are at their best in late winter and early spring.

Pests: If you notice the leaves on new growth starting to curl, it is most likely citrus leaf miner. This insect affects the new leaves of most citrus. You can spray Neem Oil or Spinosad on the new growth when it is the size of a mouse ear. Spray both sides of leaves, and repeat treatment every week to ten days. This may stop the leaf miner, and it may not. The tree will still grow and produce even though the leaf miner attacks the leaves. Once the plant gets tall, you likely won't see the damage. Many growers ignore this problem since it is largely cosmetic.

Winter Protection: Kumquats are one of the most cold-tolerant citrus. Except for Changshou, disease-free kumquats grafted onto trifoliolate rootstock can be expected to barely survive single digit temperatures of 7° F - 9° F. Changshou, because it has mandarin in its ancestry, is probably hardy to about 16°F. No Harris County site has had temperatures below 20° since the 1990's.

Pile mulch or leaves against the base to protect the graft if predictions exceed the safe temperature range. If the tree is small enough, tent the tree with a blanket or frost cloth. Do not "wrap" the tree. Protect trees less than two feet tall with a large plastic bin or cardboard box covered with a tarp. Prior to tenting or covering, place a bucket of water beside the trunk. Water gives off heat when it freezes. If you trap this heat inside the covering, it can keep the temperature inside the cover a few degrees higher. Suggested minimum temperatures are based on mature trees. Young trees are less hardy and require protection at higher temperatures.

Varieties of Kumquat for the 2020 Sale

Changshou, Meiwa, Nagami

Varieties of Kumquat for Southeast Texas

Changshou (Fukushu) Kumquat: This large fruited kumquat has a sweet mild flavor with fewer seeds and more juice than Meiwa. It grows taller and faster than other kumquats. It is grown for its large juicy fruit, fragrant white flowers, and amazing productivity. The pear-shaped fruit is larger than other kumquat varieties and it usually has five or six segments of fruit inside the sweet, thin skin. Eat the skin and all. This is a perfect selection for container growing and makes a beautiful espalier specimen. Tolerates short exposures to 20° F.

Meiwa Kumquat: The most popular kumquat for eating out of hand. It is great for fresh eating – skin and all. Meiwa is round and sweet. In fact, it is the best all around kumquat when it comes to sweetness. It's acidic and relatively juicy. Meiwa grows to about 8' tall and 6' wide and is very ornamental. The fruit has a few seeds and is ripe when bright orange in late November and is best in February.

Nagami Sour Kumquat: This kumquat has a fine tart flavor with a sweet skin. The fruits are about the size and shape of a large olive. The tree is very prolific – often bearing heavily enough to bend the branches. It is highly ornamental and very cold tolerant.