

## Let's Talk Gardening

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The Country Gardener

### Lucky You (Maybe)

For those of you who are thoughtful enough to have planted a Satsuma (tangerine) tree sometime in the past, you may be the lucky ones now who get to pick and eat this delicious orb. Generally speaking we try to pick them before Thanksgiving, but the warm spell lately has put off the ripening process just a little.

Now that the weather is just a little cooler, the fruit should start getting a little more orange in color and just a tad sweeter every day. You can pick them now if you'd like but they'll get just a little sweeter if you leave them on the tree just a week or so longer. Contrary to popular belief, they do NOT get sweeter after they're taken from the tree.

Personally, my tree had an over-abundance of fruit last year and, as a result, didn't produce even one tangerine this year...it bloomed like crazy and that alone is worth the effort. After talking to Dr. Larry Stein, the Extension Service tree specialist for this area, about it, he said that that's what they do; i.e., if you have a super-good crop one year, you probably won't have one the next year. He should know. I hope that means that I'm gonna have a good crop next year.

If you're thinking that you'd like to grow your own tangerines, consider getting the Miho or Sito varieties...they're seedless and have superior taste. The Changsha variety is almost as good but every segment has 3-4 seeds in it. The great thing about the Changsha is that it'll take temperatures down to around 5-10F without damage. The Miho and Sito will only take temperature down to about 22-25F before they need some protection.

Tangerine trees, like most citrus trees, bloom in the spring and the fragrance will fill the yard and then some. If you've never smelled citrus flowers, you really haven't lived yet. In addition, the trees are basically pest-free and require little maintenance.

For more information on growing citrus, check out the website: [plantanswers.com](http://plantanswers.com) and type "citrus" in the search engine. You'll get all the information you need to be successful in this venture.

You can stop watering the yard now for the winter. The only reason you'd need to water this winter is if you've planted some special grasses or plants that grow in winter. It's too late to fertilize the yard, so don't waste your money. Early in February, put down the pre-emergent herbicide, but don't waste money on weed and feed products.

Be sure to thoroughly water any new trees you planted this fall. If you don't have a drainage problem, go ahead and let the water fill the hole you dug to plant it in...only about every 3-4 weeks now because the water is not evaporating as quickly as last summer.

If you want/need to do some pruning and your pruning shears are good and sharp, now is the time to get it done...the leaves are gone and it's easier to see what to do. Remember the needs of the plants come first—dead, diseased, damaged limbs come off before the needs of the humans are considered. If you prune your oak trees, PLEASE paint all the wounds as soon as you make them. The possibility of oak wilt is pretty slim right now, but it's still a good idea to paint every wound...if nothing else, just to get into the habit of doing it. Latex paint is best. No other trees need to be painted when pruned.

If you normally like to plant onions from seeds and haven't done so yet, you might as well wait until spring now and just get the transplants when they become available. On the other hand, if you like elephant garlic and have some cloves left over or wanna buy some at the grocery store, you can plant them now and harvest your crop next spring.

Hope your Thanksgiving Day was all you wanted it to be.

Send your ideas, questions, or comments to [gardener@gvtc.com](mailto:gardener@gvtc.com).