

# Citrus sinensis

*Rutaceae*

Southern China, Vietnam

**Common names:** **Eng:** sweet orange; **Swah:** mchungwa.

**Ecology:** Oranges are the most widely grown and important citrus fruit, no longer known in the wild. They are very widely grown both in the tropics and sub-tropics but do not do well in very wet areas nor at high altitudes. They produce more fruit with irrigation. In Tanzania, citrus are planted on a commercial scale where conditions are best, at Muheza and Morogoro.

**Description:** A **well-shaped tree** 6-12 m **with dense foliage** and rather thin spines beside leaves. The twigs are angled when young. **LEAVES:** Oval to 15 cm, 2-8 cm across, dark green, edge entire, the **stalk narrowly winged**, having a **line or joint with the leaf blade**. **FLOWERS:** Flower buds white, in clusters of 1-6, sepals and petals thick, 5 recurved petals, 2-3 cm across. **FRUIT:** Rather variable in colour and shape, **rounded**, smooth, green-orange-yellow, 4-12 cm **across**, the relatively **thin skin hard to separate**, the pulp surrounding the seeds **sweet-sour but juicy**.

**Propagation:** seedlings, wildings, grafting

**Seed info.:**

**treatment:** no treatment necessary.

**storage:**

**Management:** Pruning to encourage branching and to keep the fruit low for harvesting.

**Remarks:** Oranges are used both fresh and for juice. There are many cultivars and desirable ones are grafted on to rootstock trees that are themselves grown from seed. Essential oils can be extracted from flowers, leaves and peel. The strong fragrance attracts bees to flowers where there is much nectar and sticky pollen. Most citrus can be both self- and cross-pollinated.

Usually eaten raw, the fruit of a ripe orange or tangerine contains about 12% sugar. A glass of orange juice provides the daily requirement of vitamin C. The vitamin (citric acid) is most abundant in limes, lemons and grapefruit.

