

## Citrus for North Florida Gardens

Many people assume that if you live in Florida, you must have a citrus tree right outside your back door. Right? Our winters may limit success with most citrus trees, but by selecting the right cold-hardy cultivar and rootstock, you really can have that back yard tree.

The satsuma tangerine, also known as the satsuma mandarin, is a citrus that grows well in our northern Florida climate. Being well adapted to regions with warm summers and cool winters, this tree won't tolerate warm winters in the southern part of the state.

Although satsumas originated in China, they were first reported growing in Japan more than 700 years ago. They were introduced into Florida and the United States in 1876. From 1908-1911, nearly one million satsuma trees were imported from Japan and grown throughout the lower Gulf Coast states. This large tangerine industry was short lived, however, due to the occasional severe freezes.

There are over one hundred cultivars that differ in maturity dates, fruit shape, color and quality. The three satsumas that are recommended for our area are 'Owari', 'Silverhill', and 'Kimbrough'. The best cold hardiness is attained when trees are grafted to trifoliolate orange rootstock. Mature satsuma trees on these rootstocks have survived winter temperatures as low as fifteen degrees.

'Owari' satsuma is the variety most widely available in Florida. This is a small to medium size tree with a wide weeping shape. The trifoliolate orange rootstock also provides the benefit of dwarfing the size of the tree, making it much more adaptable to home gardens. Even with its smaller size, this tree is a heavy producer in November and December.

The fruit is a delight to pluck from the tree and eat not only because of the tangy flavor, but also because of the loose rind and lack of seeds. Unlike other citrus, satsumas don't hold well on the tree after ripening, so harvest promptly. Use hand pruners to pick the fruit because some of the skin tends to remain on the stem if pulled, causing the fruit to rot.

For more information about satsuma tangerines, go to <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ch116>