

A taste of the outback

CSIRO Plant Industry



CSIRO

Three CSIRO-bred Australian lime varieties are proving popular with commercial growers and backyard gardeners.

Unique tastes

Amongst some of the world's most interesting and diverse flora and fauna, Australia has a range of true native citrus.

They include the finger lime, the round lime or 'Dooja', and the drought tolerant desert lime.

Native limes were used as food sources by Aboriginal people and early settlers but their size, small yields and continuity of supply from wild harvested trees have made them difficult for the Australian native foods industry to use.

CSIRO began working with native limes in 1981, initially to harness characteristics such as drought and salt tolerance in breeding citrus rootstocks. Some of the trees developed during the project showed such potential, that three lime varieties were selected as suitable for the native foods industry.

By careful crossing and selection, CSIRO plant breeders have been able to retain the unique flavour of native limes in the new varieties, producing truly novel fruit types of good size and consistent yields. The varieties can be propagated and grown using normal citrus rootstocks.

The varieties have been grown commercially since 2001 and were so successful they were made available for home gardeners in 2005.



Three varieties

The three varieties produce red, yellow or green fruit.

'Australian Blood' [®] (also known as 'Australian Red Centre') is from a cross between an acid mandarin and a native finger lime and has blood red rind, flesh and juice.

'Australian Sunrise' [®] produces a pear shaped orange fruit that makes an excellent marmalade. It is a selection from a cross between a calamondin (mandarin crossed with cumquat) and a native finger lime.

'Australian Outback' [®] (also known as 'Australian Desert') is a cultivar selected and developed from a collection of different native desert lime trees, and produces small green, juicy fruits which ripen at Christmas time. Its fruits can be used for preparing sauces.

Each of the different limes has its own unique taste. They are all relatively acidic like a lemon, but are excellent when used in sauces. They can also be used as an ingredient for preserves, condiments and beverages, or fresh as an attractive garnish.



Industry support

The breeding project involving native citrus is part of CSIRO's citrus germplasm evaluation and improvement program, and has involved collaboration with Australia's citrus industry as well as the native or bush foods industry. Tree performance has been continually evaluated by growers while characteristics such as flavour and sugar content are assessed both in the laboratory and by sensory testing.



Growing native limes

The CSIRO-bred native limes are very attractive small evergreen trees and are highly suitable for pots and courtyards. They have the same requirements as regular citrus varieties and yield consistent and quite large volumes of fruit.

Tree availability

Trees for the gardener may be available in garden centres and other retail nurseries. Growers seeking a larger numbers of trees may wish to contact any of the following nurseries:

- NSW: **AT Eyles & sons** – 02 96549227
sales@eylescitrus.com.au
- VIC: **Murray Valley** - 03 50305325
murrayvalleynurseries@inet.com.au
- WA: **Citrees nursery** - 08 92486003
john@citreesnursery.com

Contact Us

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