

## The Fragrant Meyer Lemon

The Meyer Lemon is native to China and is thought to be a cross between either a mandarin or an orange and a true lemon. It was introduced to the U.S. in the early 1900's by Frank Meyer, an employee of the Department of Agriculture.

Even when planted in the ground Meyer Lemons are smaller trees so they are perfect for growing in containers. In northern climates the plant is put outside in May and brought into the house in September or early October. At Hyannis Country Garden we commonly have Meyer Lemon plants for sale in May and June.

### Growing tips for Meyer Lemon Trees

- After purchasing a Meyer Lemon transplant it into a slightly larger pot. Mix some organic fertilizer such as Plant-Tone into the new soil before repotting.
- Keep your tree in the sun during the summer. Water it daily in hot weather and every two to three days in cool weather. Although citrus trees don't want to be kept wet, the soil shouldn't be allowed to dry out completely either. An even level of moisture is preferred.
- Apply either an organic, slow-release fertilizer or time-release product every month all year. Unlike most plants, these don't require a "resting period" in winter.
- If your tree blooms when outdoors you should have bees to pollinate the flowers. If you don't see any bees take a soft paintbrush and move from one open flower to the other, brushing over the stamens and pistol. Do this daily when the plant is in flower inside so that you are assured of good fertilization and fruit production.
- As the lemons grow they will weigh down the branches. Any branch with more than two lemons on it might have to be propped up, especially in heavy winds.
- Pick lemons when they are fully yellow. They will keep in the refrigerator for up to three months after picking.

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## Meyer Lemon Risotto Recipe

Prep time: 5 minutes

Cook time: 35 minutes

### Ingredients

- 6 cups water
- 3 Tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup finely chopped onion or scallions
- 2 cups arborio rice or other risotto rice
- 1 cup white wine
- 1 large Meyer lemon - enough for 2 Tablespoons of zest, and 3 Tbsp of juice
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1/4 cup lightly toasted pine nuts (optional)
- 1/4 cup finely grated Parmesan (optional)
- Salt to taste – 1 ½ teaspoons recommended

**1** Put 6 cups of water into a pot. Add 1 ½ teaspoon salt. Bring to a boil. Lower the heat to warm, cover and keep warm while you make the risotto.

**2** In a large, wide sauté pan, heat olive oil on medium heat. Add the onions and cook until translucent, about 5 minutes.

**3** Add arborio rice. Stir to coat. Cook, stirring, 5-7 minutes, until the rice just barely begins to brown on some of the grains.

**4** Add the wine. Stir continuously until the liquid has been absorbed by the rice.

**5** Lower the heat to medium low. Start adding the hot salted water to the rice, one ladleful (about 1/2 cup) at a time. After each addition, stir for a few minutes until the rice has completely absorbed the liquid. Stir enough to keep the rice from sticking to the edge of the pan. Stirring continuously helps extract starch from the rice, to make a creamy sauce for the rice. Continue to add water and stir, until the rice is cooked through and just a bit chewy.

**6** Stir in 2 Tablespoons of the lemon juice, the lemon zest, and black pepper, reserving a little bit of lemon zest to sprinkle on top as a garnish. Do a taste test. If the rice needs more seasoning, add more lemon juice, salt and pepper

To serve, sprinkle a few toasted pine nuts and finely grated Parmesan. This can be a first course or a side dish along with meat or fish.

**Yield:** Serves 4.