

CULTURE OF MEYER LEMONS



[Rendell's Photo Service photo.]

A fine hedge of *Cupressus lawsoniana* in a Tauranga citrus orchard. It is kept at 20ft. high and trimmed to 1ft. 6in. wide.

Shelter

Shelter from cold and prevailing winds is necessary to ensure maximum growth and tree vigour. The Meyer lemon is an evergreen, and a hedge that will protect the trees adequately the whole year round is desirable. Deciduous hedges, such as those of Lombardy poplar which are used extensively in some orchard districts to shelter pip and stone fruit orchards, are not entirely satisfactory for citrus orchards when used alone. If the situation to be planted is unduly exposed to severe winds, necessitating the planting of high shelter for protection, tall-growing trees such as poplars, pines, or eucalypts may be used in

conjunction with low-growing shelter to prevent ground draught. For that purpose bamboo (*Bambusa vulgaris*), *Tecoma carpanensis*, and *Acmena floribunda* all provide useful shelter.

Permanent shelter belts should be established at least 2 years before young trees are set out. Except in unduly-exposed localities, excellent shelter 20 to 25ft. high can be provided by *Cupressus lawsoniana* or *C. benthami*, the latter variety being more suitable for the wetter types of soil. If these hedges are trimmed carefully and regularly in the early stages of development, a shelter that is fully furnished and dense to ground level will result. *Hakea saligna* is proving

a satisfactory shelter in the North Auckland citrus areas; it grows rapidly and stands up to regular trimming. *Cupressus* species are popular as hedges with citrus growers in the Bay of Plenty district, and many fine breaks of *C. lawsoniana* may be seen in orchards around Tauranga.

Where the establishment of permanent shelter is not possible before the lemon trees are planted, temporary shelter can be provided in a very short period by growing *Albizia lapantha* (brush wattle). The seed may be sown about October in the required position, and the hedge usually reaches a height of 10 to 12ft. within 2 years. It should be kept well trimmed to prevent excessive spreading. *Albizia lapantha* is not a soil exploiter and, if anything, improves the texture and fertility of the soil.

Drainage

If natural drainage is insufficient to rid the soil of excess moisture, provision must be made for a drainage scheme capable of carrying away the water quickly when heavy rains fall. Many of the root and bark troubles associated with citrus trees are aggravated by poor drainage. No definite formula for drainage can be laid down, as each piece of land presents individual problems, but the aim should be to lay systematic and adequate drains which will carry away surplus water efficiently.

Meyer lemons should not be planted on land that is naturally wet or difficult to drain. Land with a high water-table is unsuitable for citrus culture, and successful results cannot be expected if trees are planted out in poorly-drained areas.

Stocks

Root stocks used in New Zealand for the propagation of citrus trees are the Island sweet orange seedlings, citronelle (rough lemon), and *Poncirus trifoliata* (deciduous dwarfing). The sour orange (Seville orange) is used occasionally but is not generally considered a satisfactory root stock for citrus trees in New Zealand.

Experience so far has indicated that Island sweet orange seedlings are the most satisfactory root stocks for all kinds of citrus trees intended for commercial planting. They can be recommended for Meyer lemons, as several healthy blocks of trees which have



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Hedges of *Albizia lapantha*, 2 years old, planted as temporary windbreaks to protect a young citrus orchard.