

# ask the landscape professional

Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs

Welcome to my weekly series!

Feel free to send me questions you'd like to have me answer and I will do my best to address the ones of most general interest. Email or mail your questions to:

info@sprigsandtwigs.net or

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**Question #1 this Week:** *My miniature orange tree has dried, yellowing leaves that are falling off daily. I water it twice a week and lightly fertilize once a month. There doesn't seem to be any infestation. Is there anything I can do to save it?...Paulette*

## Linda's Answer:

It's tough to say for certain because yellow leaves can be caused by a few things, either not enough fertilizer or too much water - either from insufficient drainage or overwatering. Since the leaves are also falling off, I'd suspect it's related to your watering. Either too much or too little water can cause the leaves to fall off. Excessive water also causes the roots to rot which prevents the plant from taking up essential nutrients. Lack of sunlight can also cause leaf drop - citrus plants need 8-12 hours of sunlight every day which is a problem during the short, cloudy winter months. You would benefit from using supplemental plant lights during the winter to make up for the lack of sunlight. Citrus plants like deep, but infrequent watering. It's fine if the surface soil is dry as long as the pot hasn't completely dried out. Use your finger to check the soil moisture at the roots; if still damp, delay your watering. Watering once a week should be about right. Also, make sure your pot has good drainage and don't put gravel in the bottom of the pot. Instead, elevate the entire pot above a bed of small stones so the water can drain completely and not backup into the soil in pot. Citrus plants require lots of nitrogen. There are many citrus fertilizers available; make sure you look for one that has a NPK ratio about twice the amount of nitrogen (N) than phosphorous (P) or potassium (K). Another suggestion for the low humidity winter months is to mist the leaves periodically. Good luck and let me know how you make out.



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Linda K. Lillie has been President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc. for the last 19 years. She is a graduate of Connecticut College in Botany, an accredited NOFA Organic Land Care Professional, a Connecticut Master Gardener and a national award winning landscape designer for her design and installation projects.

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