As a continuation on the theme of quality citrus suitable to grow in our area, I wanted to highlight some of the favorites of many backyard citrus growers - tangerines. Tangerines, or mandarins, are small to medium-sized fruit that have a delicious flavor and refreshing aroma like no other citrus. There are even tangerine hybrids called tangelos. Many tangerines are also easy to peel making them favorites for out-of-hand eating.

Some of our favorite tangerines are known by different names. For instance the 'Murcott' tangerine is also known as the 'Honey' tangerine. 'Murcott', which may actually be a tangerine and sweet orange hybrid, is ready to harvest from January to March and is very delicious and juicy. In alternate years it bears so heavily that limb breakage can occur. The fruit can have up to twenty seeds and develops on the outer canopy of the tree. 'Dancy' is another great tangerine noted for its easy-to-peel nature and heavy crops. The peel is so tender that it must be clipped from the tree to avoid ripping. 'Dancy' came to Florida from Tangiers in 1867 as seedling and is well adapted to our hot and humid climate. This tangerine is ready to pick from December to January.

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'Ponkan' is a tropical type of tangerine with a very low-acid fruit. An excellent backyard tree, 'Ponkan' is also known as 'Warnurco' or 'Chinese Honey' and arrived in Florida from China in the 1890's. Available from December to January, 'Ponkan' has a large fruit for a tangerine. This is another tangerine which is very easy to peel and must be clipped to avoid pulling a plug of peel out when harvesting.

Over the years, tangerines have been hybridized with other citrus such as grapefruits to produce what is called a tangelo. Some of our favorite citrus fruits are in fact tangelos; some look like a tangerine, others are

(Continued on page 2)
unique in form. Keep in mind that tangelos have very specific pollination requirements concerning compatible cross pollination. ‘Sunburst’ for instance is often called a tangerine although it is technically a tangelo. ‘Sunburst’ is available from November to December. The ‘Minneola’ tangelo or as some know it, ‘Honeybell’ due to its bell-like shape, is a ‘Duncan’ grapefruit and ‘Dancy’ tangerine cross that is a bit pear-shaped with a stem-end neck. It looks good and is a real taste treat! The ‘Orlando’ tangelo is another ‘Duncan’ grapefruit and ‘Dancy’ tangerine cross that has more of the appearance of a sweet orange. ‘Orlando’, noted for its distinctive cupped foliage, came into existence in 1911 and is available from November to January. The ‘Temple’ is most likely a tangerine and orange cross that originated in Jamaica. Easy to peel, but more sensitive to cold than other tangerine hybrids, it is available from January to March and provides both fresh fruit and juice of superior quality.

As you assemble your backyard grove, consider including a tangerine or two. The flavors and fresh eating qualities of these essential Florida fruits will be sure to please!

Resource:

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