Stop 361 Adult Tour – Ponderosa Lemon, Warm Temperate House

In the *middle* of the center bench are a number of sub-tropical fruiting plants, including several different species of citrus such as Seville oranges and kumquats. The carambola, or “star fruit” is a fruit that you might recognize from the supermarket; and while you might find it there year-round, ours produces fruit only seasonally. But by far, one plant that would be hard to miss can be found toward the end of the bench nearest the Stove House. Those enormous yellow fruits hanging from the branches of that thorny tree aren’t grapefruits – they’re lemons! The Ponderosa lemon is a cross between a lemon and a citron, which accounts for its huge size and thick skin – its’ nickname is the 5 lb lemon! Well-suited to container planting, Ponderosa lemons have intensely fragrant flowers and produce an abundance of their novel fruits nearly all year long.

Citrus plants first made their way more than 500 years ago from Asia to Europe to the New World, when Columbus brought a few seeds with him on his second trip in 1493. Citrus trees are now cultivated around the world for their variety of fragrant, flavorful and juicy fruits. Consumer demand for healthy, nutritious foods has caused continued growth in the popularity of citrus fruits and resulted in new hybrids including tangelos, limequats, and perhaps one of the strangest looking, the ugli fruit. The US ranks 2nd in the world behind Brazil in citrus production with more than 15 million tons of fruit being harvested – with almost 3/4th of that amount being oranges.