Citrus plants, like this tangerine tree, are native to Asia. They grew wild there for thousands of years before eventually being taken to other parts of the world on big trading caravans or ships. Even Columbus brought orange seeds with him on his second trip to the New World in 1493!

Probably the best-known citrus fruit is the sweet, juicy orange. Rich in Vitamin C, the citrus group also includes tangerines, mandarins, lemons, limes and grapefruits. Two hundred years ago, citrus fruits were considered exotic in many parts of the world because it was so difficult to grow them. Citrus plants need mild, sunny weather. Back then, if you lived someplace cold, and wanted an orange in the middle of winter, you were out of luck. Unless you were a wealthy king or businessman who could afford to build a giant greenhouse with lots of glass to let the sun shine in and keep the frost out! They called them “orangeries” which is just a fancy French name for a place where you can grow oranges inside! Today, citrus plants are grown outdoors all around the world. Here in the U.S., you’ll find them in California, Arizona, Texas and Florida. So the next time you go to the store looking for a sweet, juicy snack, think about Columbus and have an orange!