Mangos are in season. Although they are grown commercially in Dade, Lee, and Palm Beach Counties, mangos (Mangifera indica L.) can also be grown in the dooryard as far north as Central Florida, providing there is not a hard freeze. Mangos are considered one of the finest fruits of the world, as well as one of the most important fruit crops in many tropical and subtropical areas of the world. The fruit is used in many ways, with fresh consumption being the most widely use. It can also be frozen, dried, canned, or cooked in jams, jellies, preserves, pies, chutney and ice cream. The fruit is a good source of vitamins A and C.

Cultivated in India for more than 4000 years, mangos were gradually distributed around the world during the 16th Century, reaching North America by the 18th Century. The first recorded introduction into Florida was Cape Sable in 1833. Major producers of mangos worldwide include India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Mexico, Brazil, and the Philippines. Australia, South Africa, Israel, Egypt, and the U.S. are other important mango producers.

There are two main types of mangos, the Indian and the Indochinese. The Indian type typically has highly colored fruit and is the most commercial Florida varieties produced in Florida. The Indochinese fruit often lacks attractive coloration. Florida varieties of the Indochinese group are not commercially important, although some are planted in the dooryard. A list of the mango varieties can be found in the University of Florida/IFAS publication, "The Mango", available at the Osceola County Extension office.

Fruits of most varieties mature from May to September with greatest production in June and July. The time from flowering to fruit maturity is 100 to 150 days. Although the fruit will ripen on the tree, commercially it is picked when firm and green for shipment to market. The fruit is considered mature when the shoulder of the fruit broadens and have begun to change color from green to yellow.

The trees are evergreen, with a symmetrical, rounded canopy ranging from low and dense to upright and open. Their height is from 30 to 100 feet. The fruit is classified as a drupe varying in shape (round, oval, oblong), size, and color depending upon the variety. Mangos may be greenish, greenish-yellow, yellow, red, orange, or purple and weigh from a few ounces to more than 5 pounds. The skin is smooth and leathery. The edible flesh is pale-yellow to deep-orange and surrounds a single large, flattened, kidney-shaped seed that is enclosed in a woody husk.

Mangos are well adapted to many soil types. They tolerate some flooding or wet soil conditions, however, prefer to be located in well-drained areas. In Florida, trees growing in light sand and limestone soils must be fertilized periodically for acceptable growth and fruit production. Young trees should be fertilized every two months during the first year, beginning with ¼ lb of an 8-8-8 or 10-10-10 fertilizer analysis, gradually increasing to one pound. Thereafter, increase fertilizer amounts proportionate to the increasing size of the tree. For mature trees, a maximum of about 20 to 35 pounds per tree of a mixed fertilizer, split into two to four applications per year should be sufficient.

Newly planted mango trees need regular irrigation, especially during dry periods. Irrigation helps the tree to establish quickly and begin early growth. Research also suggests that irrigation during the period of fruit development increases mango size, earliness, and yields. Pruning is not necessary for the dooryard mango grower. However, if pruning is needed for aesthetic reasons, it should be done immediately after fruit harvest. Severe pruning does not injure the tree, but will reduce fruit production the following season.

Mature mango trees can withstand air temperatures as low as 25°F for a few hours with only minor injury to the leaves and small branches. Young trees are more susceptible to cold and may be killed at 29° to 30°F. Flowers and small fruits may be killed if the temperature falls below 40°F for a few hours. If cold temperatures occur, young trees, flowers, and fruit should be protected.

Mango trees and fruit are also susceptible to a number of insects and diseases including scale, mites, thrips, and anthracnose fungus. For more information on these pests and other information on mangos, please contact the
Osceola County Master Gardeners. They are available to take your calls Monday thru Friday from 10am to 2pm. Information for this article was taken from the University of Florida/IFAS publication "The Mango". For a free copy of this publication, call (321) 697-3000.

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