



## Citrus harvest yields 200 pounds of tart fruit

By **Tori Scaven**

On the second Saturday in March, UA students and Tucson residents alike gathered between the two rows of citrus trees that line Palm Street on the UA campus. The occasion: UA LEAF's first-ever calamondin lime harvest.

Volunteers clustered together in the morning shade as Ty Trainer, an intern both with LEAF and the Iskashitaa Refugee Network, explained about the small and tart orange fruits, and how to safely pick them from the trees.

"They're like nature's Sour Patch Kids," noted Trainer, pulling one of the calamondins down to show the group. Many of the volunteers bravely tasted them, puckering their lips as they first bit into the tart, juicy fruit.

Iskashitaa Director Barbara Eiswerth explained that the fruits are a cross between mandarin oranges and kumquats. "If you have a tart palate, you'll like them. And if not," Eiswerth laughed, "you might want to wait for the limeade." A couple of Iskashitaa refugees from Egypt brought the group calamondin limeade during the break.

Citrus rakes in hand, participants took to the trees, scooping the golf ball-sized fruits out of the leafy branches and onto tarps spread across the ground by interns with the UA branch of LEAF (Linking Edible Arizona Forests).

UA grad student Ayizuola Nazhaer marveled at all the volunteers, mentioning that in China, where she grew up, it's not very common for people to just come and harvest fruits of their own volition. "I haven't had many opportunities to get involved in this sort of thing, but it's great. I like it," she smiled.

Recent UA graduate Noel Awad was pleased to see people putting the fruits to use. When she first came to the university, she had noticed all the citrus growing around campus, but when she asked, "every single person told me they were only decorative. I thought to myself, how could this fruit be inedible?"

"Eventually, I got curious enough and picked them and ate them. And I was fine," she said. Awad comes from an Arabic family, and grew up eating many foods cooked with hydrosol, a fancy name for water infused with citrus blossoms.

Also among the volunteers was the Manalo family, who came to Tucson from the Phillipines, where calamondin limes are widely cultivated and used. "It's unfortunate that the stores here don't carry them," mentioned Maria Linda Manalo. "But we're happy that Tucson has a lot of these trees; lots of locally grown food."

Maria Linda and her children, Leann Andrei and Laila Andrea, like to use the calamondins in many recipes, from limeades to marinades. "They're so small, yet they have a lot of juice," Laila Andrea commented.

Volunteers collected roughly 10 large bucketfuls of the fruits, most of which would have normally gone to waste. The 200 pounds of harvested calamondins will be brought to local refugee families through the Iskashitaa network. "Wasting food — it's a crime," said Eiswerth.



Photo by Melanie Lenart

*The LEAF team and volunteers from around the UA and Tucson community harvest the colorful calamondins from surrounding trees.*

## Students, refugees to harvest 'sour' oranges

By **Ty Trainer**

Following the success of the LEAF Team's first calamondin lime harvest on March 8, the momentum continues with another citrus harvest planned for the morning of April 5.

This time the team is focusing efforts on another valuable, yet misunderstood citrus food resource – Seville oranges, known to many as "sour oranges."

Seville oranges, although sour in taste, possess many cultural values for refugee communities within Tucson. During a food preservation demonstration planned for April 17, refugees will be sharing some of their culinary knowledge about these fruit often considered inedible by many locals.

Glenn Wright, a citrus expert and associate professor at the University of Arizona's Agriculture Center in Yuma, shared some valuable information on harvesting techniques:

- When picking by hand, avoid "plugging," or ripping of the fruit's outer rind, as much as possible. Especially for calamondin limes, this will extend the shelf life and quality of the fruit well beyond the harvest date.
- When using a clipper, trim as close to the stem as possible. If there is concern about bacterial transmission between trees, use a 5% bleach dip to sanitize clippers.
- Get to know your trees. Yellowing leaves or bumpy bark can indicate nutrient deficiencies or viruses, which can yield lower quality fruit.
- Harvesting technique decisions should always be made on a tree-to-tree basis. Older trees may require special care, and some fruits are more delicate than others. For instance, calamondin rinds are soft, and more easily broken, while Seville oranges tend to be harder for harvesting and storage.
- Don't be afraid to pick the ugly fruit. Fruit not traditionally beautiful can be desirable for what they provide in their juice.

