

A sweet, little lemon tree

Gardening

Cheryl Maddocks

NO Aussie backyard is complete without at least one citrus tree. And before you say you don't have the space, you'll be pleased to hear modern plant breeding has come to the rescue.

The development of dwarf citrus means that a small backyard is more than adequate. These trees can even be grown in large pots on a sunny balcony. While dwarf citrus trees only grow to about half the size of ordinary citrus, the fruit is exactly the same. The citrus is grafted on to special 'Flying Dragon' dwarfing understock that limits the tree's growth.

'Washington Navel' is a standout among dwarf orange trees because its popular fruit is sweet and juicy. The fruit ripens in mid-winter.

'People who like things short and sweet should consider dwarf Lemonade trees. The fruit is so much sweeter than a lemon that it can be eaten straight from the tree.'

You can extend the harvest by also planting a 'Lanes Late Navel', whose fruit ripens in late winter and early spring.

The oranges of 'Valencia' start to ripen in midwinter and become sweeter the longer they hang on the tree. You'll still be picking them in late spring.

'Meyer' lemon trees are naturally small (about 2.5 metres) but dwarf cultivars reach a height of about 1.5 metres. The 'Meyer' is not as bitter as other lemons, which is good news for some people but not for lovers of a truly tangy lemon taste.

'Meyer' fruit is produced in abundance during winter, although the odd lemon can be found throughout the year. It is very tolerant of cold weather.

The heaviest crop of the highly acidic dwarf lemon 'Eureka' is produced in winter but fruit may be found on the tree throughout the year.

Limes have 1½ times as much acid, weight for weight, as lemons. The dwarf 'Tahitian' is popular and its fruit is prolific from late autumn to midwinter.

People who like things short and sweet



should consider dwarf 'Lemonade' trees. The fruit is so much sweeter than a lemon that it can be eaten straight from the tree.

Dwarf mandarins include 'Emperor', 'Imperial' and 'Seedless'. The fruit of 'Emperor' ripens in midwinter, while that of 'Imperial' ripens from late autumn to early winter.

The autumn fruit of 'Seedless' has puffy skin that is easy to peel.

Whether your dwarf citrus is grown in courtyard pots or in the garden, they need sunshine.

Sun must be available during summer and also in winter when they are fruiting.

Citrus trees require large pots (about 50

centimetres in diameter) that have good drainage.

Place the pots on pot feet so drainage is unhindered. Use a good potting mix and add about 10 per cent soil or, even better, some home-made compost to the mix. The tree will be in the pot for a long time, so these additions will help prevent the mix from slumping.

Citrus trees appreciate lots of frequent feeding, especially from late winter to the middle of autumn.

Always ensure the pot has been well watered before adding a complete citrus food.

Water again once the fertiliser has been added.

Technology

James Carmichael

THE Westridge Trail in the Santa Monica Mountains traces the spine of the hills, rising more than 200 metres in waves of ascent and descent.

It's narrow, with dirt and brush breaking down into rocky scree, and on a bike the steep and craggy drops are challenging. After weeks of attempts, I finally learned how to master it. My teacher was an alcoholic ex-cop who wreaks havoc as a hired gun in Sao Paolo – the title character of *Max Payne 3*.

Most people who grew up playing video games experienced that level, the one that made you want to bash your controller and head through the television.

If you played *Battletoads* or *Mega Man* you expected to reach stages that took hours. But expectations have changed. Today, even big action games – gamers' games – favour advancement over befuddlement. In other words, they're kind of easy.

Demanding video games have not gone extinct, but lists of the hardest-ever games skew heavily to older fare. Today's most challenging titles, like 2011's *Dark Souls* are increasingly seen as annoying outliers.

Games now tell great big stories and present massive open worlds. If I seldom died, even on hard settings, that's because we were now dealing with grander concerns than the attack pattern of some guy with a cutlass.

I felt this way until *Max Payne 3* changed my life a little bit, demonstrating the narrative and moral value of hard video games – the ones that make your loved ones fear for your health and sanity. I'm never going back.

In *Max Payne 3*, you play a gun-toting lunatic whose shattered life has devolved into a series of bloody firefights he doesn't fully understand. You survive by murdering gunmen before they can murder you. You don't automatically heal, and it takes just a few shots to ice you.

You have to move, prioritise threats, and react quickly. You often die not knowing what hit you. The game is an ensanguined carnival that demands focus. After a few hours, you feel the way Max is supposed to feel: hounded, confused, adrenalised.

If the game weren't close to impossible at times, the story wouldn't land. An easier version of *Max Payne* would have allowed for quicker progression through stages and narrative. Instead of using cut-scenes to tell you that Max is in harrowing situations, the game puts you in harrowing situations.

Hard games are about repeating challenges.

Before *Max Payne*, I lacked neither pluck nor fortitude. If I wiped out, I'd move on, knowing I'd have another crack next time. But after *Payne*, I didn't push on. Instead I tried again and again.

The thought here is old: Practice makes perfect. Playing this hard game reminded me that "trying it again" was not a waste of time. Mastery requires error and segmented iteration. It's simple advice that I learned by realising that I had to dive here, no here, no, here to take out the guy with the howitzer.

But none of this teaching need come at the expense of pleasure. *Max Payne 3* is fun. Bonkers fun.

Appealing tale of destructive talent

Books

Anya Whitelaw

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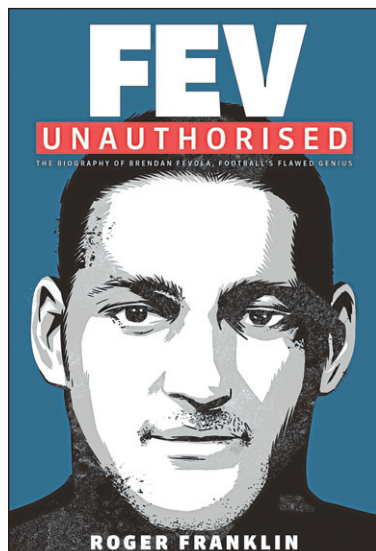
By Roger Franklin

RRP: \$34.95

IF there was one word that best encapsulates former Australian rules star Brendan Fevola it would be 'destructive'.

His goal kicking prowess for Carlton – as well as strong marks and smart leads – could see him destroy an opposition side if he was having a good day.

The problem for Fevola is that 'destructive' also describes his personality. Instead of being widely viewed as one of the greats of the modern game, Fevola is perhaps better known for his



countless off field scandals. It is these differing destructive aspects

that Roger Franklin explores in *Fev Unauthorised*, a biography of 'football's flawed genius'.

While many unauthorised biographies are poorly researched and heavily biased towards the scandalous aspects of the subject's life, Franklin has made more of an effort with his offering.

That most pages contain footnotes citing various newspaper articles, radio segments and author interviews reflects as much. In fact he even discussed his book with the man better known as 'Fev', the former Carlton talent turning him down but wishing him luck as he had plans for an 'official' autobiography.

Yet Franklin still touches on his share of scandal. How could he not, given Fevola's meteoric rise and fall?

"Every sober fibre of his being

should have been screaming that Brownlow night was one occasion when good behaviour was mandatory. Trouble was, by the time footy's problem child trod Crown's VIP carpet with a heavily pregnant Alex at his side, he had been downing Crownies all afternoon," Franklin writes of one of the better-known incidents.

While Franklin does not back down from discussing the scandal, he also does not question Fevola's talent.

Instead he tries to delve deeper and examine all the factors contributing to Fevola's downfall, even suggesting he may have been a victim of a society in which intense media scrutiny has become the norm.

It is an intriguing story on its own, but the way Franklin tells it makes it even more appealing.