

Caring For Your Landscape: Fertilizing

Fertilizing is an important step in keeping your landscaping healthy and beautiful, but without the right knowledge, it's easy to add the wrong nutrients or overdo it. Contrary to popular belief, all plants and trees do not require fertilizing. Trees and shrubs that need fertilization to stimulate growth include those exhibiting pale green, undersized leaves and reduced growth rates and those suffering from insect attacks or disease. Older, established trees do not need to be fertilized every year.

If needed, the best time to fertilize is late April or early May, or late fall once plants are dormant. Fertilizer should be spread evenly across the soil surface. The amount of actual nitrogen applied should be 3 pounds (lbs) per 1,000 square feet. Do not use fertilizer containing herbicides. For groups of plants, estimate the surface area underneath the entire planting to be fertilized.

Sod

The best time to fertilize sod is four to six weeks after installation. This will give your new grass the opportunity to become well established, and will encourage further development of a healthy root system. We recommend an application of Turf Trust Lawn Fertilizer using a rotary spreader at a rate of no more than 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of lawn. Wait at least four weeks before your next application. Whatever you do, avoid using herbicides when the weather is hot and dry, and in the first few months after your sod application.

Evergreen Shrubs

Fertilize annually in spring before, July 1, during the period of active growth, or in Fall by November when nutrients can be taken up by the roots and stored in the buds for first growth. **For narrow-leaf shrubs**, apply fertilizer any time in Spring after leaves first appear. Another application in November may improve winter color. **For broad-leaf shrubs**, fertilize at the first signs of growth with a fertilizer especially prepared for broad-leaf evergreens. Apply no more than 1/2 to 1 pound ammonium sulfate per 100 sq. ft. One month later, apply 1/4 to 1/2 pound ammonium sulfate per 100 sq ft.

Flowering Shrubs

Feeding your flowering shrubs after they've bloomed will encourage more blossoms next year. Before selecting food for your tree, it's wise to conduct a soil test to determine which nutrients are lacking. As a rule of thumb, nitrogen produces top growth, phosphorous produces flower buds, fruit, and root development, while potassium builds strong healthy plants. Only add phosphorus (P2O5) and potassium (K2O) if their need is indicated by a soil test.

Deciduous Shrubs

Deciduous shrubs can be fertilized in spring (before July 1) after the first leaves appear, while the soil is moist and root growth is active. In fall, you may want to wait until shrubs have lost their foliage and active growth has slowed. At this time of year, plants take nutrients from the soil and apply them to health-promoting functions, such as disease resistance and root development. Excess nutrients are stored in the roots and become immediately available when needed for new growth in spring.

Perennial Flowers

Perennials generally do not have a high fertilizer requirement and can even react negatively to routine fertilization. Perennials may benefit from a single fertilizer application just before or at the time that new spring growth is pushing up. The most common recommendation is no more than 1 pound of nitrogen per 1000 sq. ft. A slow-release fertilizer is the best choice to meet season-long plant nutrient requirements, but you can also use a balanced fertilizer such as 20-5-10. If your soil test indicates that you do not need phosphorous, choose a product such as 20-0-10.

Fertilizing



Fertilize with care.

Plants will let you know when they're in need of extra nutrients.

A soil test is the safest bet.

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