



LAWRENCE Landscape

Fertilizing

Fertilizing can be confusing or it can be simple. The simple rules are this: don't feed for the first two years after planting, assuming your plants seem to be growing well. After that, the easiest way to feed is with time-release granular. Use a balanced fertilizer if you are unsure what the numbers mean! If you choose to use liquid or water-soluble, follow directions to avoid burning plants. Don't over do it with water-soluble!

When to Feed:

Common wisdom says fertilize in the spring and the fall. Most plants put on the majority of their growth in the spring, therefore fertilize full strength. However, trees continue to put on a lot of root growth in the fall. You can feed at half strength in the fall. Most trees and shrubs that appear to be growing well and have healthy leaves don't need to be fertilized immediately. Upon planting, it's not necessary to fertilize. If using a quick release fertilizer, it's possible to burn roots.

How to Feed:

Plants will take up fertilizer quickest with a water-soluble, quick-release. Use this in the spring at full strength. A balanced blend (ex. 12-12-12) will be best for trees. You need to read the instructions carefully provided with the product.

For simpler fertilizing, try time release granular (similar to an Osmocote fertilizer). This allows small amounts of fertilizer to be released with every watering. In this way, plants never get too much fertilizer but rather have a steady stream over the growing season. Depending on rain, an application around the base or dripline of a tree can last 6-8 weeks. Simply follow directions on the back of the bag. For fall, apply half as much. Tree stakes are similar to this, being time-release as well. Use these for season-long application.

What to Feed:

Fertilizers are made up of three main ingredients: Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P), Potassium (K). This will be presented as three numbers (ex. 12-12-12) which are percentages. Nitrogen aids green growth. Phosphorus will boost blooms and root development. Potassium is useful for bud set and general nutrient uptake.

Trees usually call for a balanced fertilizer, where all three numbers are about the same. Use this with all other shrubs too.

A "rose mix" will have more phosphorus to boost bloom and root development. These may also have a systemic insecticide to inhibit all those nasty rose pests!

Azaleas, rhododendrons and holly need a special fertilizer blended for them like Holly-tone by Espoma. The key is a time-release granular around the base of each plant and yearly applications of organic material (compost and mulch) to help keep the soil rich. (Other acid loving plants include blueberries, evergreens, dogwoods, laurels, magnolias)

If you see symptoms of tree problems (disease, yellowing, leaf drop, scale, etc), give us a call. Many issues may be related to drought or overwatering. However, it's always best to find out! Trees are an investment and require care. We want to help diagnose any issues!