



## Fertilization Applications

Fertilization programs have many varied application programs. At Step of Green we try to develop what best works with the client's desires, the needs of the garden and budget. Unless using organic fertilization, over or excessive fertilization can be harmful to the health of a garden, regardless of species. It is best to treat the garden separately from lawn to shrubs, to trees, to perennials, to vegetable gardens....you don't use a weed and feed product on the vegetable garden, it is highly detrimental to your crop.

The following is only a guide, actual soil, light and watering conditions to every landscape differ and should be treated differently. Having a simple soils test done will assure time and money is being spent on what the plants need.

### **Determining the Need for Fertilization**

Some symptoms that indicate the need for certain nutrients include leaves smaller than usual, light green or off-color foliage, ends of branches that contain dead twigs, short elongation of branches during the growing season, and a general lack of vigor.

### **When to Fertilize**

Fertilizers should be applied so that nutrients are available when roots are growing. To have the greatest value to trees and shrubs fertilizers should be applied in late fall (October - November) after hardening or in early spring (mid-March to April) once the soil is free of frost. Trees and shrubs should not be fertilized in late summer because new foliage may be produced and it will not have sufficient time to harden-off before winter, resulting in dieback.

### **Types and rates of fertilizer**

The two types of general nitrogen fertilizers are slow-release and quick-release. Slow-release fertilizers are composed with at least 50% water-insoluble nitrogen and are the preferred over quick-release. Quick-release fertilizers are composed with less than 50% water insoluble nitrogen. We prefer the use of organic fertilizers and practicing proper horticultural conditioning to reduce the need for fertilization.

### **Lawns**

Regardless of Organic or Chemical treatments to lawns it is best is to use a combination of the following:

Early Spring - Pre-emergent crabgrass control and balance fertilizer

Spring - Broadleaf weed control and balanced fertilizer

Early Summer - Slow release summer fertilizer

Mid - Summer - Slow release turf building fertilizer

Fall - Broadleaf weed control and balance fertilizer

Late Fall - Late fall/winter blend fertilizer

Lawn fertilizers should not be used as tree and shrub fertilizer, since many chemical products contain herbicides for weed control that can damage or even kill trees and shrubs.

**Shrubs/Trees**

Newly planted trees and shrubs, and those with severe root damage from recent trenching or construction, should not be fertilized. The root systems of these plants need to be established or re-established before any fertilizers can be applied.

**Evergreens**

Evergreens will finish their growth for the year around July or August. If you notice your trees are not as deep a green as they used to be, sprinkle a tablespoon of a balanced fertilizer on top of the ground around each tree, but let the rain or your sprinkler slowly transfer the nutrients to the roots...fast fertilizing or over-fertilizing is a great way to kill your trees!

**Perennials**

Your perennials will thrive if you will give 2 - 3 light feedings per growing season. We strongly encourage the use organic supplements such as bone meal, blood meal, and fish emulsions in place of commercial fertilizers such as a slow release granular mix. The feeding program should start immediately in the spring when new growth starts to appear and be followed up with a second feeding in midsummer. Fish emulsion for liquid feeding once a week throughout the growing season can be used, results will vary due to use and soils.