

Gardening Department

Fertilizing Trees and Shrubs

We feed the kids, feed the dog and the cat, even feed tropical fish, but many of us don't think about feeding our plants. We think that the soil will provide. That may have been true when the plants were first installed, but year after year, soil nutrients are depleted or made unavailable to our plants. The result – poor, weak growth, more disease and insect attacks. An application in spring and fall of fertilizer will produce full, bushy plants that we are proud to own.

Man-made chemical fertilizers come in water-soluble types (such as Miracle Gro), long-lasting pelleted fertilizer (like Osmocote), granular types (like Espoma garden food), and solid spike forms (like Job's tree spikes). These are all inexpensive and provide quick greening and growth for our plants.

Just as an energy drink or soda will give us immediate calories and energy, no one thinks they will make us healthier. Many people are moving away from chemical fertilizers to more organic, and even better, probiotic-infused organic fertilizers such as Dr. Earth fertilizers. The benefits are tenfold as compared to the superficial greening and growth of chemical fertilizer. Plants grown this way are more “healthy looking” in addition.



Just as probiotics help people absorb nutrients and build our immune system, probiotics can also help plants in many ways. These microbes break down organic matter, making nutrients in the plant's roots, as well as helping them store nutrients in the soil and stop it from leaching. They also help build up a plant's immune system, making it more disease, insect and weather resistant. In addition, microbes improve the soil by feeding soil microorganisms.



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Fertilizing Trees and Shrubs (Continued)

Liquid feed (such as Dr. Earth) can be sprayed on the plants anytime in the growing season (April - October). Solid forms (granular, such as Dr. Earth) should be worked into the soil at the drip line (edge of plant) or if there is an obstruction (i.e. sidewalk), as far away from the trunk as possible. To feed larger trees with a granular fertilizer, you can make a series of holes around the drip line (a minimum of 8) at a depth of 6-8.” Your fertilizer can be poured into the hole and then the hole is filled back up with soil.

Summer flowering shrubs such as “knockout” roses use a lot of energy to produce flowers. These plants should be fed every 2 months in the growing season (April-September) with Dr. Earth. By feeding your flowering plants consistently, you will enjoy an abundant flower show late into the fall season.