

Fertilizing your Garden

If you're not fertilizing, you aren't getting the lush lawn, beautiful flowers, or bountiful fruits and vegetables that you should. Even if you start with great garden soil, nutrients are lost or used up over time, so the soil ends up lacking fertility. By fertilizing, you replenish lost nutrients and ensure that plants always have the food they need to flourish.

What Nutrients Do Fertilizers Provide?

Macronutrients in fertilizer are elements that plants need in relatively large amounts. They are the three numbers, sometimes called NPK, you'll see on fertilizer labels, indicating the percent by weight of each macronutrient.

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| 20 lb. Net Weight | |
| XYZ | 5-10-5 |
| Brand | Guaranteed Analysis |
| Nitrogen..... | 5% |
| Phosphate..... | 10% |
| Potash..... | 5% |
| Nutrients derived from ammonium sulfate, triple super phosphate, and potash. | |

1. **Nitrogen** (N, the first number) is an important component of most plant tissues and is essential for forming amino acids and chlorophyll. Adequate nitrogen allows a plant to produce healthy, green growth. Lack of nitrogen results in slow, stunted growth and pale, yellowing foliage (chlorosis).
2. **Phosphorus** (P, the second number) is essential for successful root formation and boosts flower and fruit production. It's important to use a high phosphorus fertilizer (**Master Start** or **Sure Start**) in the soil at planting time so it will be available for roots.
3. **Potassium** (K, the third number) improves overall vigor of the plant, provides disease resistance, and helps with cold and heat tolerance. It also improves quality and sweetness of fruit.

Micronutrients are required in smaller amounts but are also important for plant health. They include iron, sulfur, magnesium, calcium, and manganese.

What kind of fertilizer should I use?

Fertilizer choices are nearly endless, and everyone will have their personal favorites. Each has advantages.

Organic – Feeds the soil

- Improves soil every time you use
- Made from natural materials
- May increase nutrient value of fruits and vegetables

Traditional

- Works fast
- Contains some important nutrients, such as iron and magnesium, that can't be used in organic fertilizers
- Generally costs less than organic options
- Works better than organics in cold weather

Granules

- Easy to apply, but need to be watered in to work
- Nutrient-dense, so need to be applied less frequently than liquids

Wettable powders or Liquid

- Easiest form to use in containers, but must be used often (every week or two) to provide enough nutrients
- Applied in diluted form, so don't need to be watered in

Whatever fertilizer you use, try to apply regularly, and don't use more than recommended; Excess will be wasted and may cause environmental harm. Our fertilizer guide will help you plan what to have on hand and when to use it. We've recommended our most popular fertilizers, but feel free to substitute other fertilizers if you prefer.

Products

When to Use

Annuals

- *Master Nursery Rose & Flower Food*
 - *E.B. Stone Organics Rose & Flower Food*
- Use monthly.

Perennials and Flowering Shrubs

- *Master Nursery Rose & Flower Food*
 - *E.B. Stone Organics Rose & Flower Food*
- Apply monthly during growing season, March through October.

Vegetables

- *Master Nursery Tomato & Vegetable Food*
 - *E.B. Stone Organics Tomato & Vegetable Food*
 - *Dr. Earth Liquid Tomato & Vegetable Fertilizer*
- Use at planting time and monthly thereafter.

Trees & Foliage Shrubs

- *Master Nursery Multi-Purpose Fertilizer*
 - *E.B. Stone Organics All-Purpose Plant Food*
- Use monthly during growing season, March - October.

Deciduous Fruit Trees

- *Master Nursery Fruit Tree & Vine Food*
 - *E.B. Stone Organics Citrus & Fruit Tree Food*
 - *Master Bloom 0-10-10*
 - *E.B. Stone Organics Ultra Bloom 0-10-10*
- Apply 3 times yearly: In spring when leaves emerge; after fruit set; and right after harvest.
- Apply as a supplemental feeding starting when growth begins. Repeat monthly until harvest.

Citrus Trees

- *Master Nursery Citrus Food*
 - *E.B. Stone Organics Citrus Food*
 - *Iron Plus*
 - *Master Bloom 0-10-10*
 - *E.B. Stone Organics Ultra Bloom 0-10-10*
- Apply 4 times yearly: February, April, June, & August. Can be applied monthly at half label rate.
- Apply 1-2 times yearly to treat or prevent yellowing leaves due to iron or magnesium deficiency.
- Use monthly in fall and winter to sweeten fruit.

Roses

| | | |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| Monthly traditional | <i>Master Nursery Rose & Flower Food</i> | Apply when growth starts in spring and repeat monthly through September. |
| 2X yearly organic | <i>E.B. Stone Organics Rose & Flower Food</i> | Apply when growth begins in spring and again in mid-June. Optional third application mid-August. |
| 2X yearly traditional | <i>Master Nursery Multi-Purpose Fertilizer</i> <i>Bone Meal</i> <i>FST</i> <i>Magnesium sulfate</i> | Apply once in February or March and one more time in July or August. See our Rose Feeding Recipes for quantities. |
| Spring supplement | <i>E.B. Stone Organics Alfalfa Meal</i> | Add to any fertilizer program with the first spring feeding. Promotes growth of productive new canes. |

Azaleas, Rhododendrons & Camellias

- *Master Nursery Camellia, Gardenia, & Rhododendron Food*
 - *E.B. Stone Organics Azalea, Camellia & Gardenia Food*
 - *Master Bloom 0-10-10*
 - *E.B. Stone Organics Ultra Bloom 0-10-10*
- Apply 3 times yearly, starting after bloom and repeating every 6-8 weeks.
- Apply monthly from October through the bloom period

Hydrangeas

TrueBlue Aluminum Sulfate – use as a supplement to regular fertilizer to keep flowers blue.

Apply between late fall and spring. Up to 4 applications may be needed for deepest blue.

Succulents

- *Maxsea (dilute to half strength)*
 - *Cactus Juice*
- Feed monthly March-May when most succulents are actively growing. Feed once more in September. Avoid feeding during hot weather and late fall-winter.

Lawns

- *Master Green Lawn Food*
 - *E.B. Stone Organics Nature's Green Lawn Food*
 - *Master Nursery Fall & Winter Feed for Lawns*
- Four applications yearly of **Master Green** or **Nature's Green** usually keep lawns green and healthy. Feed in spring, summer, fall, and winter.
- For best results switch to **Fall and Winter Feed** for your winter feeding. **Fall & Winter Feed** contains a nitrogen source that works well in cold weather.

California Native Plants

California natives prefer not to be fertilized, but they do like to be mulched! We recommend worm castings or Bumper Crop.