

Trees are able to stand right as their roots are

Water and Feeding Landscape Trees

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this may be a benefit in that it can inhibit undesirable plants (weeds). You may want to wait until the trees are 2-3 years old, since fertilizers have been shown to have an insignificant effect on young seedling unless the site has been shown to have a specific nutrient deficiency.

As a starter, apply nitrogen at a rate of 2-4 pounds per 1000 square feet. Try to apply a “complete fertilizer” containing nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium, and perhaps sulfur. Be sure to read the directions and follow the recommendations on the label. If the fertilizer bag says 18-10-10-7, this means that the contents are 18% nitrogen, 10% phosphorous, 10% potassium, and 7% sulfur. So if you have a 100 pound bag of fertilizer, 18 pounds of it is nitrogen.

One method used to determine how much fertilizer to apply is to measure the diameter of the tree trunk. For each inch, use .1 to .2 pounds of actual nitrogen. In other words, 1 to 2 pounds of a 10% nitrogen fertilizer, such as 10-8-7. It should be mentioned here that most fertilizer applications are made based on the percentage of nitrogen in the fertilizer.

Because nitrogen is mobile in the soil, apply only the necessary amount in two intervals. One-half in the spring and one-half in the summer is a good program to follow.

Keep the fertilizer at least 6 inches away from the trunk to avoid injuring the tree. After the first year, apply nitrogen fertilizer to an area with a radius of 1.25 times that of the tree canopy. After application, sprinkle or irrigate the area to dissolve the fertilizer and enable it to move into the ground where the roots can access it. Remember, fertilizers are salts, and if you do not irrigate to dissolve the fertilizer, the tree and surrounding grass may get “burned”. Fertilizing in the fall with nitrogen is not recommended as it may keep the tree actively growing well into the frost season which will severely injure the new succulent growth.

So how much fertilizer should you apply? Let the trees be your guide. If growth is excessive on young trees, put on less per area next time, or skip the next intended application. If shoot growth is shorter than you want and leaf color is pale, increase the applied

amount up to twice the previous amount. As trees mature, fertilize them only if growth or leaf color is not up to expectation.

In most soils, you need not worry about soil pH, as trees grow satisfactorily over a wide range of soil pH's. Well-drained soils in high-rainfall areas usually are acid, as are a lot of forest soils, while those in low rainfall or arid areas are usually neutral or alkaline. In many alkaline soils (soils with a pH higher than 7.5), a number of trees may be low or deficient in iron, as evidenced by pale yellow leaves with finer dark green veins. These symptoms are most obvious on the first growth in early spring.

If a tree is not responding to nitrogen, show or describe the symptoms to experts such as your County Extension Educators or Extension Forester in your area.

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