

Extension Educator OSU-Extension Paulding County

Fertilization is an important part of landscape maintenance, particularly in areas where much of the native topsoil is removed during development and replaced by subsoil that is deficient in essential nutrients for plant growth.

Unfortunately, fertilization is a rather simple cultural practice made complex and confusing by a wide variety of fertilizer products on the market today — from "general-purpose" garden fertilizer to specialty products, such as pre-mixed liquid fertilizer concentrates, water-soluble crystals, slow-release fertilizers, azalea/camellia fertilizers and rose specials. Plants generally do not care whether a fertilizer is granulated, liquified, encapsulated, or pelletized. Plants simply want nutrients in any form they can use.

Fertilizers, however, differ in nutrient content and release duration. The type of fertilizer you select should be based not only on its cost but also on the types of plants being fertilized, the existing nutrient content of the soil, and the type of growth response desired. Liquid or water-soluble fertilizers, for instance, are often used on annuals and herbaceous perennials immediately after transplanting because their nutrients can be absorbed quickly and used by the plant. Woody ornamentals, on the other hand, store food reserves in their roots and do not have an immediate demand for nutrients after transplanting as short-season annuals do. They benefit from slow-release fertilizers that ensure a supply of nutrients as needed.

To determine whether a granular fertilizer has slow-release properties, look at the analysis on the back of the bag. Nitrogen listed in the form of ammoniacal nitrogen indicates that the product has some slow-release property. If the nitrogen is listed as being derived from urea, urea-formaldehyde, or sulfur-coated urea, the release duration of the product will be increased. Some granular slow-release fertilizers can last six to eight months after application.

Using correct fertilizer is important

Written by Jim Lopshire Thursday, April 25, 2013 12:29 PM -

Slow-release fertilizers generally cost more per pound than general-purpose granular fertilizers such as 10-10-10, but they also last longer and do not need to be applied as frequently. Organic fertilizer sources such as bone meal, cottonseed meal and animal manures can also be used. Compost is another good source of slowly available nutrients.