

Fertilizing and Watering Trees

Fertilizing trees

Fertilizing trees is rarely done after planting. It's not that people don't care about their gardens and trees, it's more that they have never been educated about it.

These days there are a great many products on the market to use to fertilize your trees. If I were to fertilize fruit trees, there are three products that I would use, but for this lesson I am only concerned about native trees and deciduous trees. For these it is very simple, slow release fertilizer is best. One that gives about 9 to 12 month release. Very easy to apply: place around the root area of the tree and in the recommend dosage. This product is very forgiving and you can not harm the tree if you put a little extra on. Once a year around early spring is best time to use this product.

In spring, when the trees come out of dormancy, you can use nitrogen type product such as dynamic lifter or animal manure for the period of high growth. But when summer hits, and your trees stop showing growth, you can stop putting these products on. If you do continue to use them, you are only wasting time and money as the trees no longer require them. They will get all they require from the slow release fertilizer.

Watering trees

This is very dependent on where you live. The type of soil present can determine whether you require further watering, and how frequently. A tree planted in wet land obviously does not require watering; like a tree planted in a dry area.

Firstly, I am a big advocate on mulching. Mulch keeps weeds down, stopping them from stealing water from the tree, whilst insulating the ground and holding the moisture in. Recently I discovered river pebbles used as mulch. They are not a cheap product, but they are very effective, and don't blow away either, creating a very clean appearance. Seem strange? Well let me tell you what happened last summer in 40 degrees plus days. I planted trees the way I normally do, with a moat around them to hold the water. I then placed weed mat to stop the weeds and circled the trees with 50mm river pebbles about 100mm deep. My findings were quite surprising. Not only did it insulate against the heat, they literally held moisture around and above the roots for days. This cut my watering times three fold. Instead of three to four times a week for newly planted trees, down to once or twice.

Mulching works, try the finger test: put your finger through the mulch, and if soil sticks to it it's usually wet enough. Look at the tree, if the new growth is wilting the tree needs water. If the leaves are burning the tree needs water. If the leaves are drooping the tree needs water (or it's over watered). The finger test will verify this.