Healthy trees and shrubs do not require annual fertilizing. If woody plants appear unhealthy, it may be due to poor soils, insects, disease or current weather patterns. Fertilizers should be applied only when a tree or shrub does not thrive and the problem can’t be traced to other causes. For help diagnosing problems before applying fertilizer, contact Cobb County UGA Extension.

If trees or shrubs do require fertilizer, apply it when the plants are dormant, in late fall or early spring. Fertilizing in early fall or late spring stimulates growth that depletes stored food supplies and weakens the plants ability to survive harsh winters and summers.

Soil Testing: The 1st Step

Before applying fertilizer, have your soil tested by Cobb County UGA Extension. An Extension agent can then tell you the exact types and amounts of fertilizer your soil will need to support the desired use. Depending on the plantings and use desired, your soil may not require any fertilizer.

Choosing the Right Fertilizer

In general, nitrogen promotes leafy top growth, phosphorus promotes root growth and potassium improves overall plant durability.

Fertilizing Shrubs and Trees

Healthy trees and shrubs do not require annual fertilizing. If woody plants appear unhealthy, it may be due to poor soils, insects, disease or current weather patterns. Fertilizers should be applied only when a tree or shrub does not thrive and the problem can’t be traced to other causes. For help diagnosing problems before applying fertilizer, contact Cobb County UGA Extension.

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Applying Fertilizers

When applying fertilizers, follow the label directions exactly and keep fertilizers off paved areas. If you use a liquid fertilizer, be careful to avoid overspraying and drift. The fertilizer may land on an area that drains straight into a storm drain or stream.

Combining Fertilizers and Pesticides

Using fertilizer-pesticide mixes usually leads to unnecessary pesticide applications. For more information about using fertilizer-pesticide combinations, see Series #5, Fact Sheet 5.1.

GETTING HELP

UGA Cooperative Extension Service for Cobb County ....................... (770) 528-4070
Community Partners for Healthy Streams .................. (770) 528-1482