

From The Roots Up

The Shrub and Tree Newsletter of Prestige Shrub and Tree, Ltd. ®
www.prestigestt.com 770-476-7781 contact@prestigestt.com

This Issue:

- ☒ Nutrients Are Essential For Proper Plant Health
- ☒ Don't Be In A Hurry
- ☒ Should I Install New Landscape Plants?
- ☒ Some Great New Landscape Plants

Volume 26 No. 1 Copyright 2010 by Prestige Shrub and Tree, Ltd. ® Use With Permission Only.

This is our first tree and shrub care visit to your property for 2010. We start the year with Lake Lanier at full pool! Quite a difference from last year at this time. So far the rainfall amounts have been above normal for fall and winter and the prognosticators predict we will have a wet and cold winter. As we all know predictions are only predictions so we will get what we get!

During this visit we will be fertilizing your trees and shrubs and looking for any potential horticultural or cultural problems that you should address. We are applying a mixture of slow release fertilizer that is activated when soil temperatures increase and root uptake begins in the plant.

With our fertilization program there is no need to fertilize flowering plants just after they bloom. Our proprietary fertilizer mixture does not force growth or cause bloom loss.

Nutrients Are Essential For Proper Plant Health

The nutrients and additives in our fertilization mix provide the plant with necessary building blocks to help the plant recover from winter stress.

A correctly administered fertilization program and pest applications help keep plants stable throughout the year especially during times of stress. Your landscape plants and turf continue

to grow and absorb nutrients even under stress situations. If there are not adequate nutrients in the soil the plants cannot absorb the necessary nutrients to sustain themselves and then become even weaker. Plants under stress also will be more susceptible to pest attack so it is important to maintain the pest reduction applications. Pest and beneficial populations are predicted to be high this year because of the excessive amount of rainfall in 2009.

Remember also to keep the soil moist even during the winter. Plants in dry soil can sustain more winter injury during extreme winter weather than normally would be expected. Root systems in very dry soil are damaged more severely than roots in well hydrated soil. With the ability to irrigate you can cycle your sprinkler system on during the winter when our temperatures are above freezing to compensate for lack of winter rainfall.

Our fertilization program is based on proven technology and a proven track record of twenty-five years of constant improvements. The program is designed to help the plants recover from stresses such as drought, disease and insect damage, winter injury and improper care. Shrubs and trees in the beds will be soil drenched while trees in the turf areas will be soil injected. This method

provides the most effective delivery method for the type of plant being fertilized. We will be applying a fertilizer mixture which consists of slow release nitrogen along with potassium, micronutrients and wetting agents to aid in soil penetration.

Most of our shrubs have very shallow root systems which do not penetrate more than 3" - 4" deep. The majority of our small trees have an anchor root system extending a foot below grade then a very extensive feeder root system that, though no deeper than 4" - 6", does extend well beyond the drip line of the tree.

The reason for these shallow root structures is our clay soil which can restrict penetration of water and becomes oxygen poor as depth increases. This lack of oxygen and moisture restricts root growth and consequently roots stay near the surface where oxygen and water is more available.

Our fertilization technique provides the plants with the necessary nutrients for growth and places the nutrients in the root zone in a balanced, non-burning package which releases nutrients **throughout the entire growing season.**

Don't Be In A Hurry!

It is not quite pruning and mulching time. We suggest you wait until late March or early April before you begin your

pruning. We have the chance for freezing weather well into April.

If you prune too early you will initiate new growth which can easily be damaged by a late freeze. Be patient and when you prune, prune correctly. The UGA County Extension service has great information on pruning which tells the why, when and how of pruning. By becoming familiar with this information you should have no problem successfully pruning your landscape. You can access all their publications on the web by following this link:

www.caes.uga.edu/publications/

As far as mulching, you should replenish your pine straw **after** you do your spring pruning. Your fall mulch layer should be adequate until then (if your layer is thin at this time you need to increase the depth of your fall mulch application) and you can also cover up any small pruning debris left over from the pruning operation. Leave the crowns of the plants clear of mulch so they can breathe. Burying the crowns and lower trunks with mulch can result in insect and disease activity and subsequent damage and decline. Crown rot has killed more plants than drought. **Thick layers of rotted mulch should be removed before installing the new mulch to prevent hair root growth into these organic layers.** If excessive hair root growth occurs in these layers, root system and plant decline will result. To replenish your mulch layer, use about 3" of fluffed pinestraw to yield a final layer of 1 ½". About 1" of bark mulch should be used to yield a final layer of ½" but bark can float and wash away

during heavy rains making it unsuitable for some situations.

Should I Install New Landscape Plants?

Winter and spring are great times to install your new landscape plants!. Planting at this time of year reduces plant stress and gives the plant a much better chance of establishment.

Previous watering restrictions really put a damper on new plant installation but with the current watering allowances there should be no problem with establishing your new planting.

Remember, newly planted trees and shrubs (especially trees) need to be adequately watered for **2 to 3 years** to allow them to weather drought conditions successfully.

Our watering advice is based on our experience in Atlanta and may be counter to what you have heard but water is the key to survival and establishment. You can't just love them and leave them.

Once planted you need to monitor the watering needs of the plants. It is a myth that the older the plant and longer it has been in the ground it needs less water to survive. Just the opposite is true. The large root system and top growth require more water than when the plants are smaller.

Trees especially need very large amounts of water the larger they become. For trees, the recommendation is 5 gallons of water per week for each inch of diameter. For example a 6" diameter tree needs 30 gallons of water per week. Obviously, very large trees need inordinate amounts of water.

The good news is that all this water can easily be delivered one

time per week. The key to proper watering and plant health is consistency and deep watering. Applying 1" of water per week is usually sufficient to keep plants stable during dry periods. The caveat here is that when we have temperatures above 95 degrees you need to apply 1" of water twice per week to compensate for evaporation. Of course since you are monitoring rainfall with your rain gauge so you know when you need to augment with irrigation.

As I said, consistency is the other key to a healthy plant. You can't make up for the lack of water by watering excessively AFTER you haven't watered for months at a time when you were dry.

Some Great New Landscape Plants

A great source for recommended landscape plants for Georgia can be found at the Georgia Gold Medal Plant website.

<http://ggmp.uga.edu/>

This site is loaded with great plants that have been chosen for there good performance in Georgia.

Always be leery of ordering from catalogs unless it is a nursery you know or a local nursery. Which leads me to this nursery recommendation for those of you that like to experiment:

<http://www.plantdelights.com/>

These folks have some of the coolest plants for you to try out in the landscape. The catalog is very entertaining as well. Be aware that they roam the world looking for very unusual and unique plants then instead of doing years of testing they just propagate them and make it available for everyone

to experiment with. Not all of their offerings are good for our area but it is fun to pursue and consider new possibilities.