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## Feeding the Garden

### SPRING FEEDING

#### **Our Magic Formula for Spring**

Take a soil test and let the Natureworks staff help you interpret it organically. Add lime as needed to adjust your PH. Our basic feeding regimen is as follows: Fill a large wheelbarrow with compost (if you don't make your own, use three 40-50 lb. bags.) Add 8-10 shovels full of Pro-Gro organic fertilizer. If your soil test indicates that you are very low in phosphorus, add extra rock phosphate. If you are very low in potassium, add extra greensand. Mix this up well with your shovel. Add 1" of this mixture around the crowns of your perennials. Add 3-4 shovels full to the base of each rose and butterfly bush.

### MID-SUMMER FEEDING

#### **Make repeat bloomers repeat and long-bloomers keep blooming**

There are many plants in the perennial garden that will either bloom continuously for 6-8 weeks (or more) or will go through cycles of heavy bloom, rest, and bloom again. This flowering takes lots of energy from the plants. You will notice a huge difference in the blooming power of your perennials if you do two important things: deadhead and feed them.

"Ever blooming" roses and daylilies are actually mislabeled. Both of these categories of plants are actually repeat bloomers. After the roses complete their first heavy flush of bloom, prune them back by at least 3-5 leaf nodes to an outside-facing 5-leaflet leaf. This encourages new growth to head away from the center of the plant. Use this opportunity not just to deadhead but also to shape the plant. Remove the spent blossoms of daylilies right down to the base before they have a chance to form seedpods. Both of these types of plants definitely benefit from a midsummer feeding.

#### **Our Magic Formula for Midsummer (July)**

Put 3 bags of compost or composted manure in a wheelbarrow. Add 10 shovels full of Pro Start (a 2-3-3 blended organic fertilizer). Mix together until the fertilizer is evenly distributed. Add 1-4 shovels full of this mixture (depending on the size of the plants) to the base of all repeat blooming daylilies, roses, perennial salvias, butterfly bushes, and long bloomers such as thread leaf coreopsis,

Kalimeris, Nepetas. You should also side dress heavy feeders such as Delphiniums that have been cut back to encourage a fall rebloom. **YOU DO NOT HAVE TO FEED YOUR ENTIRE GARDEN** if you have already fed the soil in the spring. This side dressing is an added boost for the plants that are going to go the distance for you in the late summer and fall.

#### **Foliar Feeding**

The hotter and more humid it gets, the more important it is to foliar feed your plants. I always say that if we're uncomfortable, so are the plants! Foliar feeding literally means watering the leaves with a dilute solution of some type of organic solution. I use a hose-end sprayer. It's a quick job and produces fabulous results. If the weather is very hot and humid, or rain is lacking, I use Stress-X, which is an inexpensive soluble seaweed extract. Another alternative is to water your garden with Organic Plant Magic. Both have been proven to increase the plant's resistance to stress and drought. For plants that have been drastically cut back or plants that

#### **FREE SOIL TESTING**

Take 2 or 3 shovels full of soil from different parts of your garden and put them in a clean bucket. Don't just scrape the soil surface—dig down deeply. Mix the samples together. In doing this, examine the soil with your bare hands. Is it sandy? Clay-like? Does it seem rich, or rather sterile? Once it is well-mixed, place a small sample (approximately 2-3 tbsp.) in a baggy. Take it or send it to the Ct. Agricultural Experiment Station, 123 Huntington St., New Haven CT, 1-877-855-2237.

UConn also offers testing. Kits are available for purchase at the Soil Nutrient Analysis Lab, the Home and Garden Education Center, and some of the Cooperative Extension Centers. <http://soiltest.uconn.edu>  
Soil Nutrient Analysis Laboratory 6 Sherman Place, U-5102 Univ. of Connecticut, Storrs, CT 06269-5102  
phone: 860-486-4274 fax: 860-486-4562  
email: [soiltest@uconn.edu](mailto:soiltest@uconn.edu)

Indicate on the bag your name, address, and what you plan to grow (flowers, lawn, vegetables, etc.) Also state that you would like the recommendations in organic fertilizers. It takes 1-2 weeks to get back a soil test.

need a nitrogen boost to green up their leaves (container plants being watered daily, butterfly bushes that are growing like weeds, delphiniums), I use Neptune's Harvest Fish & Seaweed Fertilizer.

How often do I foliar feed and what do I use when? I wish I could give you an exact formula. I use my instinct and I want you to learn to use yours. Monitor the weather and the conditions of your plants and keep in mind the basic guidelines above. We usually foliar feed every few weeks in a tough summer. You can't make a mistake. No matter what you use, foliar feeding can only help.

### LEAN FEEDERS

*Feed sparingly; don't add lots of compost; great for poor soil.*

Achillea	Corydalis	Helianthemum	Salvia
Armeria	Dianthus	Iris germanica	Sedums
Artemesia	Eryngium	Lavender	Stachys
Asclepias tuberosa	Euphorbia	Nepeta	Teucrium
Aurinia	Gaillardia	Perovskia	Thymus
Centranthus	Gaura	Ruta	Verbascum

### LIME LOVERS

Bergenia	Gypsophila (Baby's Breath)	Scabiosa
Campanulas	Iberis	Silver and grey plants
Clematis	Iris—German or bearded	Syringa-lilacs
Delphiniums	types ONLY	
Dianthus	Lavender	

## YOUR SOIL IS ALIVE!!!

In organic gardening, we say "feed the soil and the soil will feed the plants". Healthy soil is the basis for healthy plant life. More than a structural material to hold plants up, your soil is a living thing. Nutrients and minerals are bound into soil particles, released by the breaking down of organic matter by soil microbes and beneficial insects. In order to maintain healthy soil you must maintain a high level of organic matter and encourage essential soil life.

Chemical fertilizers feed the soil with nutrients without providing the substance of organic matter necessary to maintain soil health. Insecticides, herbicides, and soil chemicals destroy any soil life that may have existed. Eventually, the result is a "dead" soil that must constantly be fed with artificial nutrients. Compare it to humans living on vitamin pills instead of real food!

As an alternative, at Natureworks, we offer fertilizers from natural sources, meant to enrich the life in the soil, increase microbial action, thus releasing nutrients slowly. This maximizes nutrient uptake of the plant and reduces the amount of nutrients leached away or fixed in the soil.

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