



Fertilizing Citrus Trees

By Jane Morse, Manatee County Extension Agent

New Trees

Start fertilizing when buds start to swell, usually about three weeks after planting. During the first year, apply fertilizer about every six weeks from February through October. Use an 8-8-8 fertilizer that also has other nutrients such as magnesium, manganese, copper and boron. These other nutrients may be listed on the front of the bag as other macro- and micro-nutrients.

Years since planting	Number of times fertilized each year	Pounds nitrogen per tree, per year	Pounds of fertilizer per tree, per application		
			6-6-6	8-8-8	10-10-10
First year	6	0.15 – 0.30	0.4 – 0.8	0.3-0.6	0.3-0.5
Second year	5	0.30 – 0.60	1.0 – 2.0	0.8 – 1.5	0.6 – 1.2
Third year	4	0.45 – 0.90	1.9 – 3.8	1.4 – 2.8	1.1 – 2.3
Fourth year	3	0.80 – 1.0	4.4 – 5.6	3.3 – 4.2	2.7 – 3.3
Fifth year & older	3	1.1 – 1.4	6.1 – 7.8	4.6 – 5.8	3.7 – 4.7

Fertilizer should cover the water-holding basin area the first year, but keep it away from the trunk.

Water is the first requirement for young trees and is more important than fertilizer.

Older Trees (ones planted over five years ago)

Fertilize only three times a year. Late January-February; May; and October-November (after last hurricane). Apply one pound of fertilizer per year of tree age up to a maximum of ten pounds per application. A bathroom scale can be used to measure weight. This means a fully mature tree (one that is 10 years or older) would get three separate applications of ten pounds of fertilizer, for a total of thirty pounds of fertilizer for the entire year.

How to fertilize

Spread the fertilizer out evenly as many feet beyond the dripline of the canopy as the age of the tree in years (up to ten). Keep fertilizer away from the trunk. If you have an alkaline soil (high pH) apply an annual (yearly) nutritional spray (manganese and zinc) on the leaves of the tree. Also apply a chelated iron to the soil. These are readily available at fertilizer stores.