

Growing Plants Successfully - Planting & Feeding

Taking a bit of extra care when you are planting pays dividends in the long run, as plants establish and flourish more quickly. When planting trees, roses or shrubs, line the planting hole with either a mixture of peat (or peat substitute) and bone meal, which will help establishment, or a mix the backfill soil with tree & shrub planting compost. The latter will not only help plants establish, it will feed them for several months. Firm the plant in (use a stake to secure trees, especially in more exposed situations) and water it well. The stake should go in first to avoid root damage. If the weather is dry, keep the plant well watered until it is established.

Feeding

There are a variety of different types of fertilizer available, to suit different types of plants and situations.

Vegetables

Use either a general-purpose granular fertilizer, such as Growmore or Vitax Q4 (or suitable organic option – please see our factsheet on products for the organic gardener), prior to sowing/planting. Top up feeds for slower maturing crops can be given to help increase yields. You can either use the same granular fertilizer (making sure it is watered in either naturally or artificially if the weather is dry) or, for faster absorption and no need to water in, you can use a general-purpose soluble fertilizer. Alternatively, if you wish to be really specific and are implementing crop rotation, use a straight high phosphorous fertilizer such as Superphosphate, for your root crops and legumes and a high nitrogen fertilizer such as Ammonium Nitrate, for brassicas.

Established shrubs

Either a top dressing of a general-purpose fertilizer such as Growmore or organic equivalent or a controlled release feed applied in the spring will ensure your plants are healthy and happy. Alternatively, regular feeds of a soluble or liquid fertilizer throughout the season will keep your plants looking good.

Containers

Plants grown in tubs, baskets and window boxes have a high demand for nutrients as they are grown so closely together. Use either a controlled release fertilizer at planting time, which will feed them all season or feed weekly with a suitable soluble or liquid feed.

Roses

Whilst a general-purpose fertilizer will improve the health and vigor of your roses, for best results use a specialist rose fertiliser in the spring and mid-summer. This will really encourage your roses to bloom. Rose food is also ideal for other flowering shrubs.

Tomatoes

For healthy plants and the best yield, choose a specialist tomato fertilizer. These may be used on other fruiting crops (eg peppers).

Acid-loving plants

Acid loving plants such as Rhododendrons, Azaleas and Camellias are prone to iron deficiency, which will make the young leaves yellow and the plants unthrifty. Ericaceous fertilizers contain iron in a form that is easily taken up by these plants and will help to keep them looking good. These should be applied routinely in the spring and/or at the first sign of deficiency.