



Gardening Uncovered: Nursery Grade Fertilizer

By Martha Vaughn

Fertilizer provides important nutrients for your gardens and trees. The three primary nutrients are: Total Nitrogen (N), Available Phosphate (P), and Soluble Potash (K). The NPK ratio refers to the numbers in the names of the fertilizers, these numbers are the minimum percentages by weight that these nutrients are mixed into the fertilizer. For instance, if a fertilizer says it's All Season 5-5-5, that means it has 5% of each nutrient in each bag. These numbers are known as the fertilizer grade; this will allow for you to quickly compare fertilizers. So, if there is 5% of each of the nutrients in a bag of fertilizer, there is a total of 15% of nutrients, the remaining 85% of the bag is comprised of filler. Filler is sand, granular limestone, or a blend of other substrate materials.

What do the nutrients do for plants, shrubs and trees?

Nitrogen helps form the protein of the plant. It promotes green, leafy growth and high nutritional value within the plant. Nitrogen helps plants have more chlorophyll and helps with photosynthesis. One way to tell if a plant is low on nitrogen is if its leaves are yellowing.

Phosphorus is key to good root development and flower growth within plants. It helps plants absorb other nutrients effectively and helps transfer energy throughout the plant during processes such as photosynthesis. The right amount of phosphorus ensures your plants will have beautiful flowers, lots of fruit and potent seeds.

Potassium or potash helps regulate a plants metabolism, prevent disease, and increase yield and quality. It boosts growth in the right amounts and regulates overgrowth ensuring the plant doesn't over extend itself. It strengthens cell walls, allowing stronger stems, wind, and weight resistance. Potassium helps plants rest disease and pest and tolerate cold and drought conditions.

Why do we focus on Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium and no other nutrients?

Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium are considered the macronutrients because plants as a whole use more of these than other nutrients. Often, plants will deplete soil of these nutrients and need fertilizer to replace them allowing the plant to remain healthy.

Organic, synthetic, granular, soluble, which kind of fertilizer do I use?

The biggest difference in these fertilizers is the planning that goes into them. Plants cannot distinguish between synthetic or organic fertilizers.

Organic or natural fertilizer are materials derived from animal parts or plant residues. They include: blood meal, crab meal, manure, cottonseed meal, and feather meal. These take longer for the plant to break down. They also contain microorganisms that help plants survive.

Synthetic fertilizers work faster but contain manmade chemicals. They do not contain micronutrients or support microbiological life. Over applying synthetic fertilizers can burn the plants' roots or create a toxic concentration of salt. They release nutrients too quickly before the roots can catch up. They also release nutrients too fast; plants can't absorb them.

Why choose Nursery Grade Fertilizer?

Nurseries and commercial growers typically use a higher quality fertilizer. Using the best quality products ensures your investment in plants yields the highest return whether that be beautiful blooms that last for months, green lush lawns or shrubs, or trees that can withstand Florida storms.

It's important to keep your plants healthy. Anson Nursery is Citrus Counties' premiere garden center specializing in Florida Friendly native and non-native species that have been tested to grow well in our area. They carry supplies and accessories that are sure to make your gardening or landscaping project run smoothly.

To help keep customers and staff safe and healthy Anson Nursery have hand washing stations, curb side pickup, and delivery and installation services. Open Monday – Friday from 9am – 5pm and on Saturday's from 9am – 4pm, make plans to visit Anson Nursery today. Conveniently located at 5296 West Homosassa Trail, Lecanto, FL 34461. For more information you can call 352-628-4554, visit www.ansonnursery.net, or find us on Facebook. Be sure to watch for next month's Gardening Uncovered article.

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