

Fertilizing Flowers and Fruits

By Will Knowles, Creek Side Gardens

Well-balanced, general purpose fertilizers contain a blend of all the nutrients that plants need to grow. That's why additional fertilization is so important in our gardens. The numbers on the fertilizer package reflect the level of the 3 most important nutrients that need to be supplied: nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium, or N-P-K.

Initially plants focus on producing stems and leaves in the early stage of growth. Later they focus on producing flowers and fruits. As that happens, the nutrient requirements for the plant change and gardeners can make an adjustment as to which type of fertilizer to use to help the plants grow their best. Generally, as plants begin to grow flowers and fruits, their need for nitrogen decreases and their need for phosphorous and potassium increases. So begin with a fertilizer that has a higher N value but as the plants produce flowers and fruit, switch to a fertilizer with a reduced N value but increased P and K values. This is commonly referred to as a blossom booster or a fruit and flower formulation. Check with the experts at your favorite local independent garden center for help.