



UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA

# Agriculture & Natural Resources

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION • YOLO COUNTY

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## FERTILIZING FRUIT TREES

Most fruit trees in Yolo County require nitrogen fertilizer to promote good growth and dark green color. Usually no other fertilizer elements are needed.

For many trees, half of their annual nitrogen requirement should be provided in the spring and the remainder in the summer. Ammonium sulfate (21 percent nitrogen) is the most convenient and economical fertilizer to supply nitrogen to the tree.



For trees that are less than 5 years old, scatter the fertilizer under the canopy. For mature trees, spread the ammonium sulfate under the canopy and 2 to 3 feet beyond the drip line. In both cases, keep the fertilizer away from the trunk to prevent injury. Incorporate the nitrogen into the soil at once and irrigate to prevent nutrient loss to the air.

Animal manures can be used to supply nitrogen needs of fruit trees, but the nitrogen content varies and is comparatively low. Manure from a dairy may contain only 1 percent nitrogen. Dried poultry manure is likely to contain about 3 percent nitrogen.

Manures may contain harmful salts and should be applied in fall or early winter so that rains can dilute the salts and move them through the root zones at a time of year when they will do less damage. Avoid utilizing steer manure because of its heavy salt content.



When planting a tree, neither commercial fertilizer nor manure should be mixed in the planting hole because both can cause damage to the roots. No fertilizer is needed during the first growing season for most soils.

In the second growing season, apply 4 ounces of ammonium sulfate fertilizer in the spring and summer. In the third year, use 6 to 8 ounces in the spring and again in the summer.

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*Authors: Wilbur Reil and Mario Moratorio, 2001.*

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