

For Abundant Blooms in Spring ... FEED 'EM IN THE FALL

Fall. The air is brisk, the leaves are creating a kaleidoscope of rich reds, browns and yellows, football is on the television and a turkey's in the oven. Although it's not the time you would typically be thinking of your spring garden, professional landscapers and growers suggest one final feeding of your acid-loving plants, including hollies, azaleas and rhododendron for maximum results next spring.

According to these experts, feeding your acid-loving plants in the mid to late fall helps prepare them for winter by hardening off recent growth, aiding in root development and helping roots to store food for use in early spring. This will bring heartier, more abundant blooms from your acid-loving plants in spring.

Hollies, azaleas and rhododendron have special needs because they are among the many acid-loving plants which thrive in a more acidic environment. These plants are considered acid-loving because a critical nutrient, iron, is most available to them at a lower pH, when the soil is considered acidic. Without iron, these plants will turn yellow and their growth will be stunted.

Many homeowners make the mistake of thinking that all plant foods are alike, and that an all-purpose chemical plant food will offer acid-loving plants all the nutrients they need. This is not the case. Before feeding, select a plant food formulated specifically for acid-loving plants.

Experts agree that by feeding your acid-loving plants an organically balanced plant food, like Holly-tone[®], you can be assured that you are keeping soil at an optimum pH for plant health. Developed in partnership with the Holly Society of America, Holly-tone's proprietary formula offers just the right mix of quality organic and inorganic ingredients to provide safe, continuous feeding of acid-loving plants.

Professionals also suggest using a plant food which offers more than the standard nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium ingredients (N-P-K) found in most plant foods. There are 12 additional vital trace elements and micronutrients, such as iron, calcium and magnesium, which are essential to plant health. A shortage of only one of these nutrients can prevent or reduce growth to disappointing levels. When you use Holly-tone, you can be assured that you are providing all 15 essential nutrients.

It is also important to select a plant food which derives these nutrients from a complex blend of quality natural organic and inorganic ingredients, and not just from one or two simple chemical ingredients. Look for a plant food, like Holly-tone, which derives its nutrients from a wide variety of ingredients including dehydrated manure, animal tankage, crab meal, cocoa meal, cottonseed meal, dried blood, sunflower meal, kelp, greensand, rock phosphate, sulfate of potash, ammonium sulfate, and single superphosphate. This ensures that you are making nutrients available through a safe, natural process which actually enriches the soil to create a long-lasting reservoir of nutrients.

Here's how to fertilize this fall: Sprinkle a light feeding of Holly-tone around the base of the plant, directly on to the soil. It is not necessary to work the plant food into the soil. Although not required, experts do recommend a thorough watering after applying. This will make sure the plant food is in contact with the soil and will provide the moisture necessary for activating the decomposition process.

Representatives from the Espoma Company, manufacturers of premium organically balanced plant foods including Holly-tone, say that mid to late fall is one of the best times to apply

a light feeding of a fertilizer for acid-loving plants. So, make this the fall you prepare your acid-loving plants for great spring blooms.