

# GREATER HEIGHTS

## TREE AND LAND MANAGEMENT INC.

### Fall Fertilization for Established Trees and Shrubs

Trees and shrubs that needed a nutrient boost usually got their annual fertilizer application in early spring, right before active growth began for the year. This timing has been the generally accepted practice by experts everywhere for years. And although early spring is a good time, new research indicates there is an even better time.

Contrary to traditional wisdom, many experts now consider late fall, or about a month after the first killing frost, to be the ideal time for applying fertilizers. We now know plants utilize nutrients throughout the year in different ways.

In the past, the most common reason against fertilizing in the fall was the fear that plants and trees would put on new growth if unseasonably warm weather returned, only to be burned or damaged by imminently colder temperatures.



The key is to understand the difference between early fall and late fall timing. If you fertilize in late summer or early fall, when temperatures are still warm and plants are still actively growing, it is likely new growth could occur and damage to tender new foliage could be the likely result.

The rationale for late fall fertilization makes sense when you understand why. At this time, deciduous trees and shrubs have lost their foliage for the year and active growth of plants and trees has slowed. Rather than put on new foliage growth, the roots of established trees or shrubs take the nutrients from the soil and apply them to important health-promoting functions, such as disease resistance and root development. The excess nutrients are stored in the roots and become immediately available when needed for new growth in spring.

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