

Branching Out – Tree Care Tips

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Feeding this fall, could prevent starvation in spring

People often ask me if it is really necessary to feed trees and shrubs. They will often point out that trees in the forest seem to do very well, so why would the trees in my yard need to be fed? In the forest leaves accumulate on the ground and bacteria starts the process of decay. This process adds nutrients back into the soil where the root system can absorb them. There is a complete cycle of leaves falling, then decomposing and adding nutrients to the soil. In a lawn people interrupt this natural cycle when we rake up all the leaves every fall. We don't allow decomposing sticks, leaves and mulch to accumulate. We also compound the problem by maintaining lawns and turf grass that compete for food.

Feeding and watering turf is NOT enough for the trees. The turf will steal most of this food and water before it ever reaches the trees roots. A tree's root system is a tree's most valuable and most neglected component. Most people know and understand that without roots, a tree will not live. The harder, but equally true concept to understand is that a stressed, damaged, dying root system will result in a stressed declining and eventually dead tree.

Tree roots MUST have nutrients to function. This is why a fertilization program and use of organic mulch are so important. NOW, is the best time to fertilize trees and shrubs to improve poor health OR maintain good vitality. Long after the top of the tree has stopped growing for the year; root growth continues until the ground has frozen six inches or more. Root growth begins again in spring when the ground begins to thaw. To take advantage of these growth periods, you need to fertilize in fall. The fertilizer that we use is a balanced product that contains the basic fertilizer, plus the micronutrients necessary to maintain healthy trees in urban turf and soils. Because of the extreme stress that our trees have undergone in the last years with weather extremes, this fall we will also be injecting beneficial rhizosphere bacteria (this is the bacteria found in decomposing organic mater in the woods) to help plants weather extreme temperatures and moisture conditions. Studies have proven that trees with these bacteria are much healthier and can withstand the extreme weather conditions that we've been experiencing. Healthy trees are also much more tolerant of pests and disease.

Homeowners who are looking for someone to assess their trees and landscape and make recommendations on proper feeding and plant health should consult a professional arborist. If you have additional questions, would like help or information on tree care, and feeding please contact a professional, certified arborist. Gluck Tree Care, Inc. of Random Lake currently employs 3 state certified arborists and 2 arborists training for certification. Gluck Tree Care, Inc. will be starting 20 years of service in this area in 2008. Certified Arborists must follow stringent safety and performance standards, are required to have insurance, and have a trained and professional staff that is dedicated to ethics and quality in business practices.