Summer Has Arrived

The temperature and humidity levels are telling us that summer has truly arrived. Plants and trees around the state have had a chance to utilize the recent rains and put on some really nice growth. Around this time of year, many homeowners mistakenly begin 'feeding' their trees fertilizer to promote extra growth, or to correct an insect or disease problem. Trees actually create their own nutrients by making sugars in their leaves through photosynthesis. Plants require 17 elements for normal growth, and they normally are able to obtain these from the soil, air, and water. If the tree is under stress due to low light or extremes in soil moisture, nutrient deficiency problems may develop even though adequate nutrients are available in the soil. Diseased or damaged roots, improper soil pH, and trees that are planted too deep can also result in inefficient nutrient absorption. Adding fertilizer under these conditions will not improve tree growth, and may actually cause tree decline.

If the soils have been tested and a nutrient deficiency is found, then supplemental fertilizer might be needed. A light nitrogen granular turf fertilizer applied in October is recommended. Mulching your leaves and grass and regular irrigation will also help remedy nutrient deficiencies. Avoid using fertilizer spikes, since they only focus on a very small portion of the tree's root system.

An easy way to help your trees remain healthy so they are able to absorb available nutrients is to keep a wide wood chip mulch ring around your trees that is about 2-3 inches deep. Make sure to keep the mulch from touching the trunk of the tree to prevent possible decay or insect damage. Keeping the grass and weeds away from your tree, along with occasionally fertilizing your lawn will help give your trees the edge that they need.

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