Fertilizing to Create More Blooms

The secret to making your flowering trees, shrubs, annuals, and perennials bloom more is in the numbers. All fertilizers have analysis numbers on the package. These numbers represent the percentage of each chemical the product contains.

For example, 12-12-12 is a typical garden fertilizer that would contain 12% nitrogen, 12%phosphorous, and 12% potassium. The quick explanation is; nitrogen produces vegetative, or top growth, phosphorous produces flower buds, fruit, and root development, while potassium builds strong healthy plants.

Most lawn grasses are vigorous growers and therefore require significantly more nitrogen than the other plants in your yard. A lawn fertilizer would have an analysis of 26-3-3, indicating a fertilizer high in nitrogen. You would not want to use a fertilizer containing such a high percentage of nitrogen on landscape plants because it would be very easy to burn them. You must also keep in mind that many lawn fertilizers contain broad leaf weed killers, and most ornamental plants have broad leaves. The fertilizer doesn't know the difference, and it will damage or kill ornamental trees and shrubs.

During the summer months the growth rate of most plants slows down, and when plants are not actively growing, they need very little nitrogen. Although not vigorously putting on new growth, many plants such as Dogwood Trees, Rhododendrons, and Azaleas are quietly working to produce flower buds for next year. Annual and perennial flowers are also busy making new flower buds.

To encourage flower bud production you can apply a fertilizer that contains a small percentage of nitrogen, a higher percentage of phosphorous, and a little potassium. I recently purchased a liquid fertilizer with an analysis of 5-30- 5, ideal for flower production. Because the product is sold as a bloom producer, the manufacture also added a little chelated iron, manganese, and zinc, all good for your plants as well.

Remember the golden rule of applying fertilizers. "Not enough, is always better than too much."