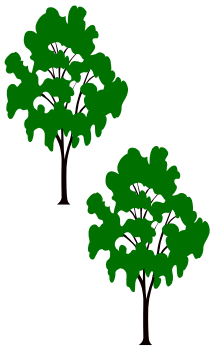
Care of Pecan Trees



Pecan trees need to be 30 feet from adjacent trees or buildings for optimal growth. Since many of our trees do not have this needed clearance, they are already at a disadvantage. These trees will need extra attention when water and fertilizer are administered. Healthy trees will maintain 8 to 16" of new shoot growth annually. If your trees are not growing at this rate, they are slowly dying!!! Pecans are by habit deep rooted and need well draining soils.

Watering - Adequate watering is necessary for the overall health of the tree, not just nut production. Adequate irrigation CAN NOT be provided by your lawn sprinklers. You must (CC&R Section 5.05) have an automatic-drip irrigation system for the watering of the trees. A mature pecan tree under drip irrigation requires 110 gallons of water per day. Mature trees should be watered every 14 to 21 days. Using this formula each tree needs approximately 1500 gallons per tree every 14 days.

There is a simple method to determine if your trees are receiving adequate water. 1) Read your water meter. 2) Set the tree station on your sprinkler timer to water for one hour. 3) Read the meter again at the end of the cycle. 4) Determine how many gallons have been delivered. 5) Divide the total gallons delivered by the number of trees watered. This will approximate the amount of water delivered in one hour per tree. You will need to increase the watering time until sufficient water is applied for either a 14 or 21-day cycle. Consistent deep watering is especially needed in August and September. Trees do not require watering in November, December, and January.

Pecans have a long life span and with proper care can live decades. But their lives are shortened by neglect—especially lack of water.

Aphids - Pecan trees are prone to aphid infestations. Aphids reduce nut production and the general health of the tree. Honeydew is also a serious problem when pecans are planted overhanging driveways or sidewalks. The concrete will be gradually eroded by the dark sticky substance, resulting in a need to replace drives and sidewalk. Several methods are available to control aphids. Systemic insecticides can be applied to the tree root in spring or early summer. Contact sprays can be applied as soon as the "honeydew" effect on pecan leave is noticeable if you have the proper equipment. Trees can be sprayed with a soap and water solution by the homeowner.

Fertilizing- Nitrogen and zinc are needed for pecan tree growth (not just nut production). Nitrogen can be easily applied using ammonium sulfate (21%N) or a balanced fertilizer. Mature trees need one pound of ammonium sulfate per inch of trunk diameter. Half of the amount should be applied in spring and the second half in early summer. If the tree is growing in Bermuda grass slightly larger amounts of fertilizer may be needed. Apply a deep watering with any fertilizer application.

Zinc needs in pecans are critical. Zinc deficiency causes smaller than normal leaves, yellowing and bunching (rosette) of young leaves and browning of older leaves. Trees stressed by zinc deficiency are susceptible to heart rot, sunburn, insects and other tree diseases. The most efficient way to provide zinc to trees is through foliar application. Apply at the rate of one tablespoon of zinc sulfate per gallon. You will need proper equipment to wet the entire foliage of the tree. Make the first application at bud break. Repeat at weekly intervals three or four more times as leaves develop.

Apply Zinc at the rate of one pound per inch of tree trunk diameter. This needs to be applied in holes at the tree drip line, which is often difficult in home landscaping. Soil application should take place in January or February.

Zinc implants are the easiest, but most expensive method of supplying this nutrient. You will need to get this treatment from a tree doctor or a commercial agriculture supplier may have the materials needed to do it-yourself.