3100 East New York Avenue
DeLand, FL 32724-6410
DeLand: (386) 822-5778
Daytona Beach: (386) 257-6012
New Smyrna Beach: (386) 423-3368
Fax: (386) 822-5767
Email: bjeansonne@ufl.edu
bjeansonne@co.volusia.fl.us
http://volusia.org/extension/

1/9/2012

Commercial Horticulture - Planting & Fertilizing Young Citrus Trees

Fertility is an important element for successful citrus production. If you are starting a new citrus orchard or simply replacing a tree that died in an orchard, when young citrus trees are planted, one important item to consider is the soil pH. This item governs the availability of important nutrients to the plant. For citrus, a pH of 6.5 is ideal. One important thing to do prior to addition of any amendments is to take a soil test. In general, for citrus, fertilizer is utilized much more efficiently at a higher pH than a lower pH. In the process of adjusting pH, an organic amendment such as compost or peat and pine bark mulch can be used to lower the pH while dolomitic limestone can be used to raise the pH. One benefit of having a soil pH of 6.5 is fungus problems are reduced considerably. Amendments like kelp meal/fish meal and humic acid (with fulvic acid) for trace elements would be very beneficial as well in this case.

In general, for young citrus trees (one to three years old), a suitable fertilizer program may include a nutrient analysis of: 8% nitrogen, 4% phosphorus, 8-12% potassium, 4% magnesium, 0.3-0.6% manganese, .03-.15% iron (chelated), .03% soluble zinc (preferably separately in a citrus nutritional spray), .03% boron, .04% copper, and .001-.002% molybdenum.

After three years, discontinue copper in the fertilizer as toxicity builds up easily. An exception to this recommendation is where soils have high phosphorus levels. In that case, no phosphorus is needed.

An on-going nutrient program may include fertilizing young trees every six weeks from February to October.

Year 1: After new growth begins, lightly and evenly spread ½ pound of fertilizer per tree per application.
Year 2: Use 1-1/2 pounds per tree per application. In the second year, start fertilizing before new growth emerges.
Year 3: Use two pounds per tree per application.

DO NOT PLACE FERTILIZER WITHIN SIX INCHES OF THE TRUNK - SCATTER EVENLY FROM SIX INCHES AWAY FROM THE TRUNK TO TWICE THE DIAMETER OF THE TREE CANOPY.

Brent Jeansonne
Commercial Horticulture Extension Agent
University of Florida/IFAS
Volusia County Extension