

SOIL TEST INFORMATION SHEET NO. F-540

Prepared by Extension Fruit and Nut Specialist Dr. Michael Polozola

Citrus (Homeowners)

1. Citrus trees grow best in soils with a pH between 6.0 and 6.5.
2. Annual Fertilization Schedule
 - Apply fertilizer once a year in late January or February using a balanced product such as 13-13-13, 8-8-8, 8-12-8, or 6-12-6.
 - Use 1 to 1½ pounds of fertilizer per year of tree age, up to a maximum of 12 pounds per tree.
 - Examples: 1-year-old tree → 1 pound; 5-year-old tree → 5 pounds; 12-year-old tree → 12 pounds.
3. Application Tips
 - Spread fertilizer in a 12–18 inch wide band around the outer edge of the tree canopy (drip line), where feeder roots are most active.
 - Avoid placing fertilizer near the trunk, which can damage the tree.
 - Water thoroughly after applying fertilizer.
4. Mid-Season Nitrogen Boost (Optional)
 - In early June, apply a nitrogen-only fertilizer to support fruit development.
 - Use ¼ pound of 34-0-0 (ammonium nitrate) or calcium nitrate per year of tree age, up to 12 years.
 - Calcium nitrate is a good alternative that also supplies calcium, which helps improve fruit quality and reduce disorders like blossom-end rot.
5. Citrus trees grown in Containers have different needs.
 - Use a slow-release citrus fertilizer or apply a liquid feed every 4–6 weeks during the growing season.
 - Ensure containers have good drainage and avoid overwatering.
 - For best results, test the potting mix using a soilless substrate test (available through LSU AgCenter).
6. Contact your county agent for additional information and help in your fertilization program. The agent also receives a copy of this report for the parish office files.

Citrus (Commercial Groves)

1. Citrus trees grow best in soils with a pH between 6.0 and 6.5.
2. Fertilization Timing:
 - Main application: Late January to early February.
 - Supplemental nitrogen: Early June.
 - Do not fertilize after the last week of June — late-season growth is more susceptible to winter injury.
3. Bearing Trees (4 Years and Older)
 - Base application (January–February): Apply 1 to 2 pounds of a balanced fertilizer (such as 8-8-8, 13-13-13, 8-12-8, or 6-12-6) per tree per year of age, up to a maximum of 12 pounds per tree.
 - Mid-season nitrogen (June): Apply $\frac{1}{4}$ pound of 34-0-0 (ammonium nitrate) or calcium nitrate per tree per year of age, up to 12 years.
4. Application tips:
 - Broadcast fertilizer in a 12–18 inch band around the drip line (outer canopy).
 - Avoid placing fertilizer near the trunk.
 - Maintain soil pH between 6.0 and 6.5.
5. Nutrient monitoring: take annual foliar samples (mature leaves from the last flush) to assess nutrient levels. Use results to adjust your fertility program. Contact your parish agent for sampling guidance.
6. Non-Bearing Trees (Years 1–3)
 - Year 1 (after transplanting): begin fertilizing 4–6 weeks after planting, once growth is visible. Apply 2 pounds of balanced fertilizer per tree in: Mid-March, Early May and Early June.
 - Year 2: Apply 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds per tree in: Late January or early February, Mid-March, Early May and Early June.
 - Year 3: Apply $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds per tree in: Late January or early February, and Mid-March. Then apply: $\frac{3}{4}$ pound of ammonium sulfate or $\frac{1}{3}$ pound of ammonium nitrate per tree in early May and early June.
7. Contact your county agent for additional information and help in your fertilization program. The agent also receives a copy of this report for the parish office files.