



Tree and Shrub Fertilization Near Waterways

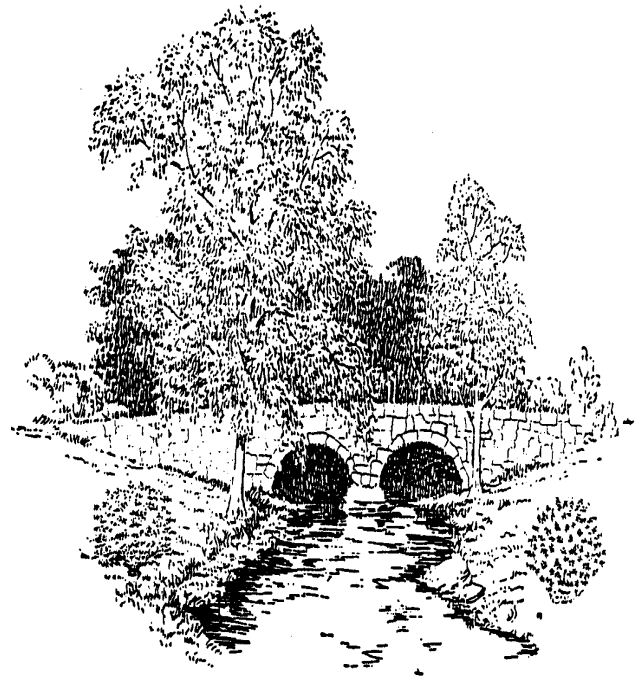
E. Thomas Smiley, Ph. D., Plant Pathologist

Maintaining healthy trees near streams and lakes has many benefits to the waterway and adjacent property. Tree and shrub roots hold banks in place during floods and heavy rains. Leaves of trees and shrubs intercept rain, reducing soil compaction and runoff, which can lead to soil erosion and silt accumulation. Shade is important for wildlife nesting and seeds for food. Mature trees greatly increase the value of waterfront property.

A key component of any tree and shrub maintenance program is the management of soil nutrients. When nutrient levels are low, plant vitality is reduced, resulting in poor growth and increased susceptibility to pests.

To correct low nutrient levels the Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories has developed a slow release fertilizer, BOOST[®], and subsurface application techniques that place the nutrients directly in the root zone of the tree.

This fertilizer and application technique provides important benefits to sensitive waterfront areas. First, since the material is applied below the soil surface there is virtually no runoff, even during hard rains. Second, the synthetic organic source of nitrogen does not move readily in the soil. It tends to stay in the area where it is



installed. The nitrogen is slowly released by soil microbes making it available to plant roots. Third, phosphorus and potassium are present at one-third the level of nitrogen. These levels greatly reduce the potential for leaching into waterways.

With proper fertilizer selection and application techniques, fertilization of shoreline and sensitive area trees and shrubs will not only benefit the plants, but will also aid in protecting the waterway and enhance property values.