

August 2007

MEDIA RELEASE

Embargo - nil

Farm Forestry Tips – Fertilising

This month in my farm forestry plantation I will be fertilising! Newly planted trees, like babies, need nurturing and plenty of nutrition to make them grow into strong healthy adults. "Feeding", or fertilising is best undertaken about a month after planting when the seedlings have extended their roots into the soil. If you have planted trees this winter, September is the ideal time to fertilise your plantation, as the trees begin their spring growth.

The right dose of fertiliser will help trees get through the critical infant stage allowing the roots to penetrate deeper into the ground accessing more water. It will also give them an early growth spurt, helping them to grow tall quickly and getting them out of the reach of hungry predators such as rabbits, wallabies and wombats.

For the best results implement the following guidelines.

Note the soil types on your property.

Seek advice on the type and amount of fertiliser to use for each soil type. This will give the best growth rates, and save you money.

Time your application of fertiliser about one month after planting.

Fertilise trees during active growth to get the most benefit.

Place fertiliser in a spade slit about 20cm on the downhill side of the tree. Fertiliser will kill the tree if it comes in direct contact with the roots and may wash onto the roots if placed on the uphill side.

Fertilising is most effective if it receives a light rain within a few days after application to wash the nutrients into the soil. Without rain some of the nutrients may evaporate and will have not benefit the hungry trees.

For best results, kill all weeds and grasses around the trees with herbicide application prior to planting. Fertilising your trees when weeds are present will also help the weeds to grow creating more competition and taking more moisture away from the trees.

With the right application, fertilising will increase the survival rate of your infant trees and will help them grow into strong vigorous adults, to be sold for high value timber products.

Gippsland Private Forestry provides free advice and assistance to private forest growers on all aspects of forestry including plantation establishment, management and harvesting. With the right advice to treegrowers, Gippsland will have a sustainable, well managed plantation industry.

If you would like further free advice contact Emily May at Gippsland Private Forestry (03) 5153 2947 or emily@gpf.com.au.

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