

Wenke Greenhouses

Best Practices for Fertilizing Annual Beds at Installation

1. Focus on Nitrogen (N) and Potassium (K)

Nitrogen and Potassium are the nutrients most commonly lacking in Midwest soils. Choose fertilizers with higher N and K values to support growth, color, vigor, and stress tolerance.

2. Fertilizer Types

Uncoated Granular: Lower cost but requires multiple applications and carries a higher burn risk.

Controlled Release Fertilizer (CRF): Recommended for landscapers. Provides consistent nutrition for 3–6 months with one application.

3. Recommended CRF Analysis (N-P-K)

- 15-9-12 (4–6 month)
- 16-4-9 (3–4 month)
- 18-6-12 (3–4 month)
- 19-9-19 (high N + high K)

4. Good / Better / Best Recommendation

GOOD: Uncoated granular fertilizer applied every 3–4 weeks (e.g., 20-10-20 or 15-0-15).

BETTER: 3–4 month CRF (e.g., Osmocote 16-4-9 or Harrell's 18-6-12).

BEST: 5–6 month premium CRF (e.g., Osmocote 15-9-12, Harrell's POLYON 19-9-19, or Florikan 18-6-12).

5. Application Best Practices

Apply CRF at planting and incorporate lightly into the top 1–2 inches of soil. Follow labeled application rates.

6. Product Examples

Osmocote: 15-9-12, 16-4-9.

Harrell's POLYON: 18-6-12, 19-9-19.

Florikan: Known for highly consistent release and durable coating.

Lebanon Turf: MESA 19-5-8 (generally considered a GOOD-tier option).

7. Additional Insight from Industry Experts

Some growers report the best performance using Florikan and Polyon due to their consistent nutrient release and highly durable coating, which is more resistant to heat or physical damage. Osmocote is widely used and effective, but there have been anecdotal instances of 'dumping'—a rapid unintended nutrient release—when pellets are damaged or exposed to excessive heat.