

AGRONOMY PROFILE

Starter Fertilizer for Corn

OVERVIEW. Demand for higher grain yields is reinforcing the importance of healthy, robust corn crops. Using a starter fertilizer can increase early plant growth, nutrient uptake and yield potential, as well as improve overall plant health.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW.

- Starter fertilizer is a concentration of fertilizer placed near the corn root zone at planting. A starter fertilizer increases the nutrient source for the newly formed root system and helps with any adverse conditions that may arise soon after planting.
- There are three methods for application, depending on soil type and amount of fertilizer applied: two-by-two, surface dribble and “pop-up.”
- Starter fertilizer application on cool, wet soils will supply nitrogen and phosphorus to the plants, producing healthier plants, vigorous root systems, faster growth, quicker canopy closure and higher yields. A starter fertilizer program also can be beneficial on soils with a pH below 6 where aluminum and iron are tying up phosphorus.
- A starter fertilizer should have nitrogen and phosphorus rates blended for your specific needs.

ACTION STEPS.

1. Determine the best application type:

- **Two-by-two placement** is the most common and requires precision placement and specialized equipment. Starter fertilizer is applied 2 inches to the side and 2 inches below the seed depth. This below-ground placement reduces the likelihood of runoff.
- **Surface dribble** delivers a stream of fertilizer on top of the surface 2 inches to one side of the corn row and requires less equipment expense.
- **In-furrow (“pop-up”) placement** requires basic equipment and is best used in areas with high nutrient levels where lower fertility rates are needed.

2. Be aware of timing, soil temperature and type: Apply starter fertilizer in early spring, when the soil temperature is not warm enough to mineralize the organic matter for critical nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus.



Nitrogen-deficient corn is visibly lighter than healthy corn seedlings.

30 SECOND SUMMARY

- Starter fertilizer can help get your corn off to a healthy, uniform start to maximize yields.
- There are different starter fertilizer application methods to choose from, depending on your soil situation.
- To maximize results, use a starter fertilizer program that fits your farming practices and equipment.

NOTES:
