

MANAGEMENT IN BRIEF

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April - May

NUTRITION

Soil and leaf samples



- This is the right time to take leaf and soil samples for the analysis after summer flush has matured and before the end of May.
- There are two methods, make sure you are consistent enough to use the same method each year. Otherwise you can't compare the results.

1. **South African method:** Sample from spring flush (6 to 8 month old non-fruiting branch with no signs of new flush) from Feb to Apr.
2. **Australian method:** Sample youngest fully expanded leaf from hardened off summer flush from March to May.

- Soil sampling should preferably be done at the same as with leaf sampling to simplify the interpretation of the results.

Details on the sampling procedure are explained in the Cultivation of avocado handbook (Page: 183 185).

Boron and Zinc



- These elements are essential during this time of year, for stimulating pollen tube growth and it is a good practice for growers to ensure that the tree has sufficient quantities of Zn and B when the flowers open.
- Therefore you can start applying soil Boron and Zinc now, if your trees need any B and/or Zn applications.

By applying it now, you will be increasing the levels in the plant before flowering/fruit set.

Phosphate



- You will need to apply MAP if P levels are low and N levels are below leaf norms.

Alternatively, other phosphorus sources such as single supers, phosphoric acid and compound fertilizer blends containing P can be applied during the season depending on plant needs.

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CULTURAL CONTROL

Pruning



- To maintain productivity, trees need to be pruned immediately following harvest with further maintenance during summer;
- This will ensure adequate light penetration into the orchard, thus keeping the lower canopy productive.

Pruning should be implemented in such a way that crop load is maintained and all the energy should be reserved for flowering and fruit set rather than wasting it on developing unnecessary flushes.

Irrigation



- Avocado is an evergreen crop and therefore requires irrigation throughout the season, when evaporative demand exceeds effective rainfall.

Therefore, you will need to manage irrigation frequency based on your tree water needs which will promote flowering and fruit development.

Mulching



- This will help to limit *Phytophthora* root rot problems and therefore improving tree health.
- Coarse mulch not deeper/thicker than 15cm all the way around the tree will be essential
- Additionally mulch also have other benefits like suppressing weeds under the trees and improving physical, chemical and biological characteristics of the soil. (*See Mulching article in this issue*).
- Be careful of poor water penetration and anaerobic conditions if the mulch is too fine.

Insect Control



- Continue to monitor for fruit flies and sucking-stink bugs on a weekly basis.
- Monitor early in the morning and control only by using registered chemicals when the threshold values are exceeded.
- Keep scouting for fruit damage.

For stink bug control, it is advisable to use chemicals with short withholding periods such as Chess (pymetrozine), which can be used up-to 21 days before harvest.

All growers should consult their Subtrop advisor/ consultant to ensure that they use only registered chemicals and that MRLs are adhered to.