



FROM THE FILES OF THE DIRT DIVA DIARIES

Feeding Reference Guide

What to feed, when to feed it, and how much — by crop type

Ivy says: "Containers are hungry — every time you water, nutrients wash out the bottom. That's not a flaw, it's just the deal with container gardening. The fix is a simple, consistent feeding schedule. This page is your cheat sheet."

UNDERSTANDING NPK — THE 3-NUMBER CODE ON EVERY FERTILIZER BAG

N

Nitrogen — Leafy Growth

High N = more leaves. Use early in season or for greens & herbs.

Best for: lettuce, basil, kale, spinach

P

Phosphorus — Roots & Flowers

High P = more blooms and fruit set. Use at planting and during flowering.

Best for: tomatoes, peppers, fruiting crops

K

Potassium — Overall Health

Strong stems, disease resistance, fruit quality. Use throughout season.

Best for: all crops, especially fruiting & root

FEEDING SCHEDULE BY CROP TYPE

CROP TYPE	AT PLANTING	DURING GROWTH	DURING FRUITING / HARVEST	FREQUENCY
Leafy Greens VEG Lettuce, spinach, kale, chard	Balanced (10-10-10) mixed into soil	High-nitrogen liquid feed	Continue nitrogen; reduce if bolting	Every 2 weeks
Herbs HERB Basil, parsley, cilantro, dill	Light balanced fertilizer	Light nitrogen (half strength)	Stop feeding 1 week before heavy harvest	Every 3-4 weeks
Tomatoes FRUIT	Balanced + bone meal mixed in	Balanced; switch to low-N once flowering	High-P, low-N formula (tomato fertilizer)	Every 1-2 weeks
Peppers & Eggplant FRUIT	Balanced fertilizer mixed in	Balanced liquid feed	Low-N, bloom-booster formula	Every 2 weeks
Cucumbers & Squash FRUIT	Rich potting mix + slow-release	High-N early; balanced mid-season	Low-N, high-K once fruit sets	Every 1-2 weeks
Root Vegetables VEG Carrots, beets, radishes	Low-N, high-P/K mixed in	Light feeding only	Stop feeding 3 weeks before harvest	Monthly only
Beans & Peas VEG	Minimal — fix their own nitrogen	Phosphorus boost at flowering	Light potassium; no nitrogen	Monthly
Perennial Herbs HERB Rosemary, thyme, oregano, sage	Minimal — prefer lean soil	Very light balanced feed in spring only	No feeding needed	Spring only

SEASON-AT-A-GLANCE FEEDING CALENDAR

Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Mix slow-release granules into fresh potting mix. Start liquid feeding 2-3 weeks after transplanting.	Peak feeding season. Water + feed consistently. Switch fruiting crops to low-N once flowering begins.	Reduce feeding frequency. Stop feeding 4-6 weeks before expected first frost. Focus on harvest.	Indoor herbs: light feeding monthly. Outdoor containers: no feeding needed while dormant.

My Fertilizer Notes

✦ Ivy's Feeding Rules

- ✦ Always water before feeding — fertilizing dry soil burns roots
- ✦ Less is more — half-strength more often beats full-strength occasionally
- ✦ Yellow leaves + slow growth = hungry plant. Yellow leaves + wet soil = root problem, not hunger.
- ✦ If using slow-release granules at planting, wait 6-8 weeks before adding liquid feed
- ✦ Organic fertilizers are gentler and won't burn — great for beginners
- ✦ Fish emulsion smells terrible and works great. You've been warned.

✗ Signs of Overfeeding

- ✗ Brown leaf tips or edges (fertilizer burn)
- ✗ White crusty deposits on soil surface
- ✗ Lots of lush growth but no flowers or fruit

Fix: flush container with clean water 3x, stop feeding for 2 weeks