TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION
Williamson County

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Williamson County
3151 SE Inner Loop, Suite A
Georgetown, TX 78626-6343
Ph: 512.943.3300
Fax: 512.943.3301
Url: http://williamson.agrilife.org

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Vertical Compost Application for Trees

The drill-hole technique requires drilling holes into the soil and filling the holes with a quality, finished compost. The two-inch holes are drilled to depths of 8-12 inches and are spaced two feet apart in concentric circles around the tree, beginning at a point about 1/3 the distance from the trunk to the drip line and extending three to six feet beyond the drip line.

For columnar trees, holes should be drilled 4 to 6 feet beyond the drip line. Avoiding major roots whenever possible.

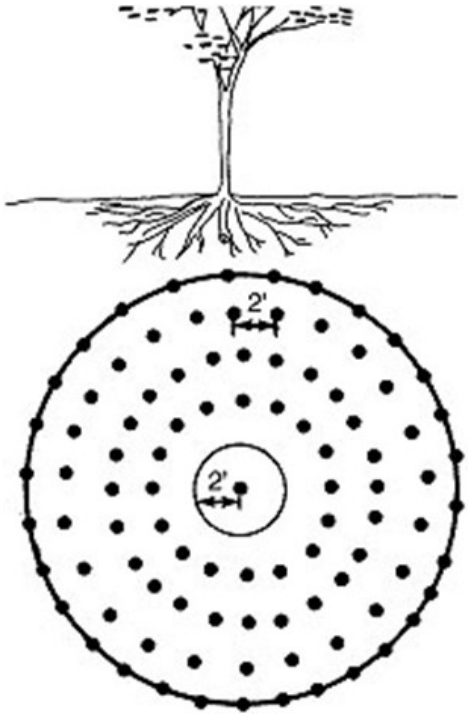
If leaves are raked, use this technique annually to compensate for mineral mining and to place the nutrients below the turf roots.

Use a drill with a reverse switch to allow the auger to be backed out of the ground if a root is hit. Also, flag the locations of water and gas lines before drilling. Holes up to four inches wide may be used in extreme cases. It is much easier to make holes in moist soil than in dry soil. However, if the soil is saturated, the sides of the holes will be "glazed," making them less effective for air diffusion and nutrient dispersal.

While rarely used today on a commercial scale, this method is effective in opening heavy compacted soils, allowing nutrients, water and air to reach the root zone.

In addition to compost, in extremely compacted clay soil it may be necessary to add expanded shale to the compost in alternate years to improve aeration and drainage.

This technique compliments surface applications of compost to turf in the landscape. Applying 1/4 to 1/2 inch of compost to turf annually helps to improve soil tilth and supply nutrients to the grass under trees.



Drill-Hole method for compost placement around a tree. Place compost in two-inch holes, 6 to12 inch deep about two feet apart in concentric circles around the tree trunk and extending about six feet beyond the branch spread of the tree.