



Tom Manders cultivates his Buxus in open fields. Once harvested, he ensures that he has stock immediately available for his clients.

# Tonton Buxus sees the benefits of the Ekote controlled-release fertilizers as complementary fertilizer for open-field cultivation of ornamental crops.

The 'Faulkner' Buxus variety keeps its green colour throughout the cultivation season thanks to fertilization with Ekote controlled-release fertilizers.

Since 2008, Tonton Buxus has been a household name in Buxus cultivation. Ton Manders' company in Beek en Donk sells Buxus in many shapes and sizes. A well-planned fertilization policy is essential to the cultivation of our Buxus plants,' explains Ton Manders. 'We noticed that the "Faulkner" variety in particular lost its lush, green colour towards the end of the cultivation season. By working closely together with Ekompany's Jo Slijpen, we investigated whether this could be prevented by using Ekote controlled-release fertilizers.'

Authors: Ton Manders and Stan Hoeijmakers

Of course, everyone knows that soil life is essential

### Set-up and application

'Faulkner' grows slightly differently compared with 'Sempervirens', for example 'Faulkner' turns green later in the growth cycle. It's often tricky to maintain the plant's colour during winter due to nutritional shortages. 'In our test, we used a product that would continually release nutrients for a period of between four and five months. The plant therefore receives a steady supply of nutrients each day, rather than too many or too few nutrients in a short amount of time as is normally the case with conventional fertilization,' explains Ekompany's Jo Slijpen. 'We are specifically referring to an NK fertilizer (18-0-16 + 3 MgO) containing partially coated nitrogen and potassium (75-80%). The dosage of this fertilizer was 525 kg per hectare.'

### Soil life and leaching

Tonton Buxus is particularly concerned with soil life. 'Everyone knows that soil life is extremely important and that we as growers need to take responsibility,' says Manders. 'That's why we use organic fertilizers as a foundation. We used 1200 kg of an NPK variant that we applied three times. The benefit of this fertilizer is that it also sustains soil life, which ensures the long-term health of the soil. One disadvantage is that the fertilizers leach quickly, meaning that the plant often doesn't receive sufficient nutrients. This was apparent in the colours of our plants during winter. That is why I also fertilize with Ekote controlled-release fertilizers.'

'Ekote fertilizers are granules surrounded by a thin organic coating that attracts and absorbs moisture,' adds Jo Slijpen. 'The dissolved nutrients are then released into the soil through osmosis. Depending on the product, the nutrients are released in a period between two and eighteen months. The release period is predictable, no nutrients are lost due to leaching, and there is no risk of root scorching.'

Additionally, the longevity of Ekote for the duration of the application period is only determined by the soil temperature, and not by conditions such as rainfall, irrigation, soil structure, pH value of the soil, or bacterial influences. As the temperature increases, the nutrients are released more quickly. When the temperatures drop, the nutrients are released more slowly meaning that the longevity is extended. An important detail is that Ekote does not interact with the soil life, in contrast with other slow-release fertilizers. This means it is not harmful to soil life and is excellent for use as a complementary fertilizer.

### Reducing costs and extending the season

'In addition to paying attention to the soil life and the environment, we have to keep an eye on our financial and business interests. We perform three applications of the basal fertilizer, each consisting of 400 kg per hectare during the season in the months of May, June, and July. This means that the labour costs are high. The Ekote fertilizers can be applied in one pass at the start of the growing season which ensures consistent nutrition throughout the period,' explains Manders. 'On the other hand, the cost of using controlled-released fertilizers are slightly higher. Then again, you make up the difference from the savings on labour costs and in the plant's improved quality. You have to

look at the entire financial picture. As each plant maintains its green colour throughout the winter season, I am trying to extend the season so that I can sell throughout the whole year. This means I can harvest the plants when they are fresh and skip the greenhouse entirely. At present, that is not possible because of the colour. Additionally, you can optimize the efficiency of fertilizer used per hectare because of the significant reduction in leaching. This means you need less of the product to get better results.'

## The weather is becoming more extreme

### Observations

'Ekote can be applied as a row, scattered, or dibbling fertilizer,' according to Slijpen. 'Depending on the chosen application, the advice on dosage and application method may vary. We generally advise row application as this ensures that the granule is worked into the soil, which is conducive to the effectiveness of the product.' 'We used row application for Ekote and noted that the plant maintained its nice winter green colour as well as a nice density' Manders adds. 'The controlled release of the nitrogen component in particular ensured very smooth leaf growth.'

### Insurance

Ton Manders views the use of controlled-release fertilizers as a form of insurance. 'The weather is becoming more extreme,' he explains. 'Longer periods of drought and higher temperatures as well as extreme wet periods with a lot of rain are occurring more frequently. You can reduce your vulnerability to the elements when using fertilizers that are less susceptible to leaching in wet periods and that keep supplying nutrients during long dry periods. I believe that using organic fertilizers together with Ekote is a very good combination that incorporates the best of both worlds; ensuring that the soil is maintained and keeping the plant supplied with nutrients with the help of an efficient and environmentally-friendly fertilizer,' concludes Ton Manders.

**ekote**  
ORNAMENTALS

Producer: Ekompany International –  
info@ekompany.eu – +31 (0)46 727 1000