

Fall Is Good Time For Soil Testing

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — The ground-softening effect of early fall rains makes "Indian summer" days an ideal time for taking soil samples from lawns and cropland, noted Dr. V. Allan Bandel, soils specialist for the University of Maryland's Cooperative Extension Service.

Farmers should begin taking soil samples as soon as corn and soybean harvesting is completed.

Bandel urges homeowners to take soil samples immediately so they can get lawn and garden soil at proper nutrient levels for a fast start in the spring.

That will give ample time in most parts of the state to get test results back from the University of Maryland Soil Testing Laboratory so that plans can be made for proper liming and fertilization before winter sets in.

Bandel noted that fall is a good time to apply phosphorus and potassium to alfalfa — a hay crop that needs adequate phosphorus and high levels of potassium for winter hardiness.

With some parts of the Mid-Atlantic area reeling from three consecutive summers of drought, farmers and homeowners alike should be doubly certain they aren't wasting money with need-

less lime and fertilizer applications, Bandel commented.

He pointed out that avoiding needless fertilization also will prevent pollution of streams, rivers and the Chesapeake Bay.

Farmers should consider reducing their application rates of phosphorus and potassium on fields where crop yields have been reduced by drought, Bandel declared. Such a decision is best made on the basis of a soil test,

which shows how much fertilizer carry-over remains in the soil.

Another way to cut back on commercial fertilizer usage — without reducing crop yield potential — is to apply livestock or poultry manure, Bandel remarked. Manure testing will help a farmer know what he is doing to maintain proper soil fertility.

Manure testing is a free service offered by the University of Maryland soil testing laboratory when done in conjunction with the laboratory's soil testing program. The cost for field crop soil tests is \$5 per sample.

Bandel's calculations show that farmers can save \$60 to \$70 per acre by using manure at recommended rates. Thus, manure should be tested and treated as a valuable fertilizer. It should be stored until needed, applied at the proper time, in an approved manner — and in the correct amounts.

Because it varies so widely in nutrient content, a manure analysis is essential in order to use manure wisely.

Further information and kits for both soil and manure testing are available from offices of the University of Maryland's Cooperative Extension Service. There's one in every county throughout the state in Baltimore.

To contact a local office, look under county government (or Baltimore City) listings in your telephone directory.

Forage Test Van To Stop In Wayne County

The Penn State Mobile Forage Test van will make a stop in Wayne County on Wednesday, October 26. The mobile van will be located at the Belmont Fire Hall on Route 371 west of Pleasant Mount at the intersection of Route 670 from 8:30 a.m. until 11:30 a.m.

Farmers, feed dealers, veterinarians and others who have hay and silage samples to be tested can deliver them to the test van and it will be tested while they wait. The van uses NIR (Near Infra Red) process of testing. Cost of testing the sample is \$13 each. For those who wish, a complete feed program can be provided for an additional charge.

The van operator is Dr. Terry Maddox, Penn State University dairy nutritionist. Following the Wayne County visit the van will be located at the Susquehanna County Office Building, Montrose, from 1:00 to 3:30 p.m. the same day.

According to John Creighton, county agricultural agent, persons who are unable to deliver the samples to the van may drop them off at the Wayne County Extension Office, Courthouse, Honesdale, prior to October 26. In this case they will be delivered to the van by Extension personnel.

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