

Capitol Region Agronomy Team Report



SOIL TESTING: HOW TO TAKE GOOD SOIL SAMPLES

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Soil testing is an excellent method for estimating the fertility status of soil, and it provides valuable information for developing a sound fertility management program. Because the fertility status of a soil cannot be determined visually, a good soil test is essential.

A soil test is no better than the care given to taking samples.

Follow the guidelines listed below for taking soil samples. It is very important to completely and accurately fill out the soil test information sheet that goes to the lab with the sample.

For convenience in submitting more than three samples, a multiple soil sample form and kit is available, allowing you to send in up to 10 samples with one form. Mailing kits for submitting samples to the Agricultural Analytical Services Laboratory at Penn State are available from all Penn

State Cooperative Extension offices.

Guidelines for taking soil samples:

- Do not wait until the last minute. The best time to sample is in the summer or fall.

- Take cores from at least 15 to 20 spots randomly over the field to obtain a representative sample. One sample should not represent more than 10 to 20 acres.

- Sample between rows. Avoid old fencerows, dead furrows, and other spots that are not representative of the whole field.

- Take separate samples from problem areas if they can be treated separately.

- In cultivated fields, sample to plow depth.

- Take two samples from no-till fields: one to a six-inch depth for lime and fertilizer recommendations, and one to a two-inch depth to monitor surface acidity.

- Sample permanent pastures to a three- to four-inch depth.

- Collect the samples in a clean container.

- Mix the core samplings, allow to air dry, and remove roots and stones.

- Fill the soil test mail-in container.

- Complete the information sheet, giving all of the information requested. Be sure to include the soil name. Remember, the recommendations can be only as good as the information supplied.

If the area has been in no-till corn management for two years or more, it is advisable to use a reliable field kit to measure the pH of the surface soil. Surface applications of nitrogen fertilizers and manure may acidify this layer rapidly and decrease herbicide effectiveness.

Collect several cores less than two-inches deep from the no-till

area and mix thoroughly in a clean bucket. Remove a sample for pH measurement. Simple colorimetric pH kits normally are the most satisfactory for field use. If the pH of the surface soil is less than 6.2, take a standard soil sample for laboratory analysis. Apply the recommended lime as early as possible before corn plantings.

If this standard sample does not indicate a need for limestone and the surface pH is below 6.2, apply 2,000 pounds per acre of calcium carbonate equivalent. This amount should be adequate to neutralize the acidity created by the surface-applied nitrogen fertilizer.

This article is adapted from The Agronomy Guide 1999-2000 published by Penn State. It can be found online at <http://AgGuide.agronomy.psu.edu/>.



Ephrata Fair Plans Tent City

For many, the leaves on the ground aren't the true sign of fall — the tents in the park are. The Ephrata Fair begins on Tuesday, Sept. 26, and tents spring up in the Ephrata Park days before.

The Ephrata Park is home to Tent City, part of the Ephrata Fair. Tent City features agricultural and commercial exhibits, including livestock, grain, and scarecrows, in addition to numerous contests and more.

Fairgoers can check out a variety

of exhibits and competitions in Tent City, including goat and swine judging, tractor driving, a pig chase, and good old-fashioned tug-of-wars. There's homemade ice cream for sale and a great display of antique farm equipment, too. Make sure you check out the educational exhibit of hay bales displaying various sizes and techniques of baling.

The Ephrata Area Young Farmers' Association's refreshment stand offers delicious food Tuesday through Friday evening. They also conduct a special dinner

on Tuesday night at 5 p.m.

The public is welcome to take advantage of the Tent City Tour and demonstrations offered Wednesday, Sept. 27, from 9-11 a.m. The Cloister FFA will give demonstrations at various stations located throughout Tent City. The tour is packed with information about the agricultural community. To arrange group tours, call Carolyn Pfautz at (717) 733-8172.

A convenient and free shuttle bus will be provided for transportation from uptown to Tent City on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. The bus will leave from the corner of south State and Franklin Street approximately every hour on the hour from 4-10 p.m. The shuttle will also be available on Senior Citizen Day, Wednesday, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Bloomsburg Fair

According to a book about the fair written by David R. Millard, historians have called it a "street carnival." The men who first set it up called it an agricultural fair.

That was back in the fall of

1855 when Franklin Pierce was the 14th U.S. president and James Pollock from Northumberland County was the 13th governor of Pennsylvania. Columbia countians, about a thousand of them, dug into their respective pockets for the 10 cents that admitted them to this new adventure in Bloomsburg. How many others jumped over the rail fence will never be known. The big event was staged in Caleb Barton's field at the lower end of Second Street, now Main Street.

It all came about because of the enthusiasm of one man, Dr. John Taggart. He had visited a county fair in the northern part of Pennsylvania earlier in the summer. Impressed by the values to a community of an agricultural exhibition, he convinced others of the benefits that could come from such a movement in Columbia County.

Finally, five men held a consultation and decided to undertake an agricultural fair if they could find willing exhibitors of fruits, vegetables, and other farm

products. Through personal solicitation, they found enough interest to encourage them and proceeded with arrangements for an event that was to become The Bloomsburg Fair.

The men who ventured all of this were Dr. John Ramsey, B.F. Hartman, Caleb Barton, William Neal, and I.W. Hartman.

Much has changed since 1855, but it is still a county fair.

Admission gates to the fair open daily 7 a.m.-9 p.m.

Livestock animals are not required to be in barns until 8 p.m. Sunday.

Agricultural, arts and crafts, educational, horticultural and industrial exhibition buildings are open daily 9 a.m.-10 p.m.

Poultry and rabbit exhibits open daily at 9 a.m.-10 p.m.

Fairgrounds are located off exit 34 of Route 80.

Fair admission to grounds is \$3. Children 12 and under admitted free all week. For more information, call the fair at (570) 784-4949 or contact them on the web at bloomsburgfair.com.

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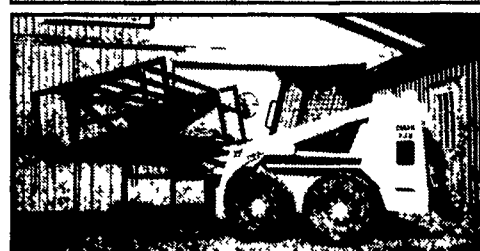
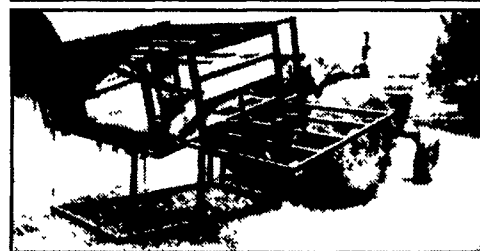
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