

June

Prepare for a fall vegetable garden by soil testing.

Now is the best time to submit your soil samples for planning a fall vegetable garden. Soil samples submitted have faster turnaround times as the lab is less busy. This will allow for plenty of time to plan for liming and fertilizing. There is a belief among some gardeners that lime cannot be over-applied. Well, it can be. Soil pH that is too high from its over-application can adversely affect plant growth by potentially causing problems with micronutrient availability. Lime also works best if incorporated several months prior to planting since its reaction time is not immediate. Unlike fertilizer, however, it can be applied at any time when its recommended. For N-P-K fertilizers as recommended by soil test, their application needs to be timed near the time of planting and during the actual growing season, depending on the plant's needs. Additional information about timing of fertilizer application is found in this note www.ncagr.gov/agronomi/pdffiles/stnote4.pdf. So, begin planning and take the first step, submit a soil sample!

Test source water for irrigation systems.

Before you turn on that drip or overhead irrigation system, it is a good idea to collect samples of your source water and have it tested by the NCDA&CS Agronomic Division. Chemical problems with source water can affect plant growth and quality. By testing water now, you can correct any problems before you start irrigating your crops.

Solution analysis is a service that measures the chemical properties of water that affect plants. In eastern North Carolina, high alkalinity is a potential water problem. Irrigating with highly alkaline water can lead to an increase in soil pH that can limit availability of some essential plant nutrients, especially micronutrients.

The solution report indicates whether alkalinity is a potential problem and, if so, provides helpful advice to correct it. Some other potential source water problems include high soluble salts, iron, boron, sodium or chloride. Once identified, these problems can either be corrected or effectively managed to prevent plant growth problems.

If crop plants are stunted and/or discolored, check for nematodes.

The best way to find out if nematodes are responsible for an area of poor crop growth is to collect and submit two sets of soil samples: one for nematode assay and one for fertility analysis. An accurate diagnosis of nematode populations during the growing season provides a sound basis for effective

management in the future. Knowing the species and numbers present facilitates informed selection of resistant varieties and crop rotation strategies.

Fertilize centipedegrass lawns in June.

June is the month to fertilize your centipede grass. Centipede grass differs in rate and schedule of fertilization from other warm season grasses. Centipede requires only 0.5 pound of nitrogen each year. Higher than desired soil pH and phosphorus or inadequate potassium may result in centipede growth problems. If soil sampling was not done in the previous 2-3 years, now is an excellent time to submit samples for faster turnaround times and to determine the rate and best fertilizer to use. Lime will also be recommended if needed.

Important Reminder: Do not fertilize cool-season lawn grasses—fescue, ryegrass and bluegrass—during the summer. Wait until September.

Summer is a good time to submit soil samples from lawns & gardens.

Summer is when the NCDA&CS soil testing lab can process samples most quickly —usually ten days or less. Homeowners and landscapers are urged to submit samples at this time and avoid the peak-season fee (late November through March). Farmers who are maintaining cool-season pastures can also submit soil samples now so they will be ready to apply phosphorus and potassium in late summer or fall.

July