

November

Remember the new fee structure for soil testing and waste analysis.

New agronomic testing fees approved by the State Legislature and the Board of Agriculture this past summer go into effect this fall. All soil samples received during the lab's peak season (from 6 p.m. November 27, 2013, through March 31, 2014) will incur a \$4-per-sample fee. This fee should be paid online via credit card or escrow account before sample shipment. Beginning December 3, 2013, fees for analysis of in-state waste samples increase from \$5 to \$8.

Give appropriate care to plants you bring indoors for the winter.

By November, most houseplants should be brought inside to protect them from cold temperatures. Indoors during the winter, plants need less fertilizer and may get too much or too little water. Fertilizing once every four to six weeks with a soluble or time-release fertilizer should provide plenty of nutrients. Fertilizing too often can stress plants as excess fertilizer salts build up in the media.

Check plants frequently to see if they need water instead of watering on a schedule. Overwatering can be a problem in winter months when light is low and growth is slow. Underwatering can also occur as increased use of the home furnace tends to dry both the air and potting media at the same time.

Check source water used for agricultural purposes.

Water used for agricultural purposes-such as irrigation or fertigation, livestock and poultry watering, aquaculture and fish production-should be analyzed every year. Testing is especially important after an extended wet or dry period. For a fee of only \$5 per sample, solution analysis measures concentrations of 13 minerals plus pH, electrical conductivity, alkalinity and hardness. The solution report indicates whether any of these parameters could lead to production problems (such as clogged nozzles or reduced medication efficiency) and provides recommendations to correct any apparent problems.