

ISU Soil Test Lab Update

<http://www.agron.iastate.edu/soiltesting/>

March 2010

Early Spring Soil Sampling Issues

Winter came early last fall, and many fields could not be sampled as usual. Questions have been raised concerning interpretation of results from spring sampling, mainly from wet soil. Previous research has indicated no difference between fall and spring sampling for phosphorus (P) and organic matter, and very variable but inconsistent differences for potassium (K). The pH results often do not differ significantly either, but sometimes could be 0.1 or 0.2 units higher after a period of excessive rain. Any soil test result will be more reliable when samples are not taken with excessively wet soil. Sampling with too wet soil causes poor depth control, compaction inside or below the probe width, and bad mixing of soil cores that may result in erroneous test values. Therefore, patience for sampling until conditions are reasonable is a must. You can see Extension Publication Pm-287 for a discussion of soil sampling methods and more information. This publication and other related fertility publications are available on the Extension Publications or Soil Fertility web sites (www.extension.iastate.edu/store and www.agronext.iastate.edu/soilfertility).

Late Spring Soil Nitrate Test for Corn

The time will soon be here for the late spring soil nitrate test for corn. The cost is \$5.00 per sample. Our goal is to have results available within 24 hours, or the next business day, after receiving the sample. Results can be e-mailed, faxed, or mailed to the submitter. Submit samples immediately or keep them cold before submitting. Do not mail samples on Friday. The Lab is not open on Saturday or Sunday and the samples will not be received until Monday. Please see Extension Publication Pm-1714 for sampling and recommendation information. This publication and other related nitrogen publications are available on the Extension Publications web site. More information is available from our web site: <http://www.agron.iastate.edu/soiltesting/>

Soil Sample Bags

Soil sample bags are available from the Soil Test Lab. We provide these bags at no charge to our clients. However, the bags are expensive, so we ask that you please use the bags only for samples that will be submitted to this Lab. You may purchase the bags at cost for other uses. To request a pkg. of either 50 or 100 bags, e-mail soiltest@iastate.edu.

Review of Available Soil Test Options

The Soil and Plant Analysis Laboratory offers a variety of soil test options to serve the needs of our agronomic and horticulture clients. The regular series of tests costs \$8 and includes fertilizer recommendations for P and K, and also limestone application (pH). Tests for organic matter and zinc (Zn) can be added to the regular series for an additional charge.

Analyses of other elements in soil, soil extracts, water and plant tissue samples are also available. Please call the Lab for details *before* submitting non-standard samples.

Iowa Certified Soil Testing Labs

The lab participates in the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) soil-test certification program. A list of Iowa certified soil testing laboratories is provided quarterly by IDALS.

<http://www.agriculture.state.ia.us/certlabs.htm>

Prepared by: Brian Hill and Antonio Mallarino,
Department of Agronomy, Iowa State University.

Soil and Plant Analysis Laboratory Staff
Brian Hill, Assistant Scientist, Lab Manager
Kerry Culp, Clerk

Chairman, Soil and Plant Analysis Laboratory Advisory
Committee: Antonio Mallarino

For additional information about the lab and the variety of testing options we offer please contact us by phone at 515-294-3076, fax at 515-294-5567, or e-mail to soiltest@iastate.edu