

Now Is a Good Time to Do Soil Testing

Submitted by Laura Paine, Crops and Soils Agent

The new Non-Point Pollution Standard developed jointly by the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection and the Department of Natural Resources will require all farmers (even non-livestock farmers) to have a nutrient management plan by 2008.

Soil testing is the first step of developing a plan to manage nutrients on your farm. The UW Soils Lab provides soil analysis through the Columbia County Extension office for \$6.50 per sample. You can obtain soil sample bags and borrow a soil probe from the office. We can also help with interpreting results and developing your nutrient management plan.

We recommend that you sample fields in 5 acre sections. To get an accurate representation of soil fertility in each section, take 10 to 20 cores in a zig-zag pattern across the field and mix them together in a bucket. The cores should be as deep as your plow layer. Take a subsample of about a cup to be analyzed and discard the rest.

It's a good idea to sample your soils every 3 to 4 years, whether or not you're working on a nutrient management plan. The soil is the foundation of your production system and maintaining proper fertility and pH levels is key to healthy, profitable crops. For more information, contact Laura Paine at 608/742-9682 or laura.paine@ces.uwex.edu.