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### ***Soil Sampling Forage Stands***

It's been said that a good time to get a soil sample from a forage stand is any time. While I agree with that for the most part, there are some compelling reasons why fall is a *better* time.

For application planning purposes, knowing soil test levels now can help us best manage application needs. This is especially true of lime applications, which typically require some time to take effect after application.

From a budgetary standpoint, it can help with forward planning and taking advantage of pricing opportunities. Under application can hurt production that may translate to other expenses down the road. Over application isn't economically or environmentally sustainable. The only way to know for sure what is needed is via a soil test.

For best results, sample every three to four years. Use a soil probe when possible to get an accurate sample from top to bottom (a spade or shovel tends to result in sample bias based on a sample that is wide at the surface and comes to a point at the bottom). Probes are available for check out from all three District Offices.

Samples should represent a uniform area and be from forty acres or less when feasible. If field variability exists, sampling on smaller areas may be of value. Collect 15 to 20 cores (subsamples) to make up a representative composite sample. If after pH only, sample to a depth of three to four inches. Samples to determine P and K levels are best done to a six-inch depth.

For more information on sampling forage stands, contact any of our District Offices or e-mail me at [dhallaue@ksu.edu](mailto:dhallaue@ksu.edu). In addition to probes available for checkout, Offices also have soil test bags for submitting samples. Some offices also offer cost-share programs in collaboration with local Conservation Districts. Consult individual offices for details.

### ***Tree Leaf Disposal***

Got a plan for leaf disposal this year? Fortunately, you have options!

First, consider the damage they may or may not be doing by remaining on the lawn surface. A scattering of leaves won't hurt much. If they are thick enough to prevent sunlight from reaching turf plants, then a disposal option might be on order.

Consider composting them for reapplication to gardens/flower beds in the future. If you want to avoid the whole composting process, try using a mower with a bagging attachment to chop and collect leaves for transport to the garden or flower bed. Apply in a two to three-inch layer on the soil surface and incorporate with tillage. You can repeat this process every couple of weeks until you run out of leaves or soil is too wet for tillage.

Don't want to take time to compost? A mulching mower can shred leaves, allowing them to filter into the turf canopy, as long as the leaves aren't too deep to begin with (mow while you can still see grass peeking through the leaves). Work at Michigan State shows that adding one pound of leaves per square yard (about six inches of leaves piled on the grass) via a mulching mower for even five consecutive years resulted in no long term detriment to the turf stand.

Raking and bagging is an option as well, but mulching or composting allows for reuse of the material to enhance organic matter levels in the garden or existing turf stand.