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Missouri Vegetable Growers Association NEWSLETTER

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Reading Your Soil Test

By Norman Kilmer

We all know how important it is to take soil tests in our produce growing plots. We can tell if we need to add a soil nutrient to our soil to make it more productive. After all, the more productive the soil is, the greater the yields of the crop will be.

Now you took the time to take the soil test the proper way, next you have it sent off to the soil testing laboratory. It does not make any difference which lab you send it to, just as long as there is enough information recorded from the testing to make a correct recommendation.

Some laboratories only report Phosphorus (P), Potassium (K), Calcium (Ca), Nitrogen (N), PH and Cation Exchange Capacity (CEC). This is not the true picture of your soil. If you are growing vegetables with only these nutrients tested, you have wasted your time in taking a soil test. This would be a little like buying a car without seeing it. The salesman is telling you it has 4 wheels, a horn, 2 headlights, 2 tail lights and 4 doors. Would you buy this car? Of course not, you do not know what brand it is, what color it is, how many miles are on it, is it a gas model and what year is it. Is it in good shape? If you would not buy a car with just 4 or 5 items listed, why get a soil test with only 5 items listed in the results?

A good soil test will have at least 20 items listed. Some soil tests have a lot more than 20 items listed. The more items tested, the better picture you will have on what your soil is. The same holds true in buying a car, the more info you have of this car, the better decisions you can make whether you will buy it or not. A soil test is no different.

So lets look at your soil test. Are the results listed in pounds per acre, or are they listed in ppm? Both ways are correct. If your test is in ppm, then multiply by 2 to get pounds per acre.

Now, where should these numbers be? Good question. You can ask six different people that do soil recommendations and you will most likely get six different recommendations. This can become a very confusing mess if you let it. The best way is to stay with the same person for recommendations until proven wrong. After all, they are just human like you.

After working with several mentors over the years, I see most of them coming up with the same recommendations, so that is what I will base this article on. The person that does your soil recommendations may agree or disagree. That is their choice of course.

Here are the ideal levels (with the people I work with as of now) we like to see in the soil. These levels are just to balance the soil or in other words get a good foundation built in the soil nutrients level. You may need to add more nutrients for your crops needs. No different than building a building. You have to have a good foundation under it or it will fall over in time. Soil is no different.

Here are the ideal soil analysis for acid reports in both ppm and pounds per acre. An acid test is a report of what is in your soil. It really does not tell you what is available to the plants, for that you need a water-soluble report. Not all laboratories have the water-soluble report. I would recommend that you get both reports.

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Reading Your Soil Test
By Norman Kilmer (continued)

Your organic matter should be 3 to 5 %. For each 1% organic matter, your soil has the ability to retain 1 inch of water and you have 30 lbs. of free nitrogen. The higher the organic matter, the more ability the soil has to move moisture up or down in the soil profile. Your soil will dry out quicker in a wet period. In a dry period, it has the ability to pull up some of the deeper down moisture.

Phosphorus (P) levels on some reports are only listed once. Others will list it as p1 and p2. If you have only one listing, the level should be 35 ppm or 70 lbs. In double listed phosphorus, p1 should be 35 ppm or 70 lbs., p2 should be 100 ppm or 200 lbs. Why do some labs list the phosphorus in two forms? The theory behind it is that p1 is more available than p2. An easy way to remember this is that p1 is your checking account or wallet and the p2 is you CD accounts. Still there, but harder to get.

- Potassium (K), 215 ppm or 430 lbs.
- Magnesium (Mg) should be less than 270 ppm or 540 lbs.
- Calcium (Ca), 1900 ppm or 3800 lbs. per acre at the least.
- Sodium (Na) or salt 20 ppm or 40 lbs. or below.
- Soil pH, 6.5 to 7.0
- Cation Exchange Capacity (CEC) 17+

Now we have the main ones listed, so what should the base saturation percentages be? K 3-5%, Mg 12-15%, Ca 75%, Hydrogen (H) 1-2% and Na 0.5%

The micro nutrients should be at the following levels:

- Sulfur (S) 35 ppm or 70 lbs.
- Zinc (Zn) 2.5 ppm or 5 lbs.
- Iron (Fe) less than 20 ppm or 40 lbs.
- Copper (Cu) 1.0 ppm or 2 lbs.
- Boron (B) 1.0 ppm or 2 lbs.
- Na 0.5 or less.

All rates are per acre.

If your soil test also has a water soluble report, here are what those amounts should be:

- P 6-10 ppm or 12 to 20 lbs.
- Ca 220+ ppm or 440 lbs.
- K 107+ ppm or 214 lbs.
- Mg below 35 ppm or 70 lbs.
- Na 15-20 ppm or 30-40 lbs.
- S 20-30 ppm or 20-60 lbs. per acre

So there you have the levels you should have on your perfect balanced soil. My soils are never in perfect balance and do need help. How are yours? Does it need help in some way? Most likely it does. Good luck in getting it to that perfect level and keeping it there.



Upcoming events

Great Plains Growers Conference

January 10—12, 2019
Missouri Western State University
in
St. Joseph, Mo.
<https://www.greatplainsgrowersconference.org/>

Central Missouri Drip Irrigation Workshop
Friday, February 22, 2019
(Changed from December 18, 2018)

Morgan County Seeds
9 am to 3:30 pm

Don't Forget Your MVGA membership!

2019 Membership levels

- Student - \$5
- Basic - \$20
- Electronic - \$30
- Full - \$55
- Premier - \$60
- Corporate - \$110
- Lifetime - \$350

For membership application go to:

<http://www.moveggrowers.org/>

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10 Ways to Save Cash When You Start a Restaurant

It takes money to make money. You've heard that your entire life but those words of wisdom hold as true today as they did when you were in school and dreaming of the days you could make your own way in the world.

Keep reading for 10 quick tips that can help you manage finances when you're ready to run a restaurant.

1. Have a plan.

Trying to open a restaurant without a detailed business plan is like trying to win a football game when no one on the team knows the play. A [business plan](#) will help you make budget projections, identify demand and keep you on track.

2. Get your financing in order.

Business loans for unknown restaurant brands are few and far between. If you have good credit, a personal loan may be your best option. But you have to know what you're getting yourself into before you get in over your head. Consumers Advocate notes that a personal loan can carry an interest rate from less than [5 percent to 35 percent](#) or more, so do your research and leave the high interest loans alone.

3. Negotiate.

If you're planning to rent the space for your restaurant, know that lease rates are often [negotiable](#). You might, for instance, be able to agree on waived rent for the first three months or divvy up repair costs between yourself and your landlord in the form of a lowered monthly rental fee.

4. Initiate advertising efforts.

Advertising is expensive but there are plenty of ways to creative about your brand without shelling out big bucks. WebRestaurantStore.com [suggests](#) first creating a website that includes everything on your menu plus links to your social media accounts.

5. Go unconventional.

You aren't limited to a single brick-and-mortar location. This revelation can lead you down a number of paths but the most popular would be straight behind the wheel of your very own food truck. A [food truck](#) costs around \$50,000 to start but is a fun way to meet and greet your customers and see where your specific style of food is most in demand. You can also consider catering or establishing a [pop-up restaurant](#) business model.

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6. Know your taxes.

Uncle Sam loves a good meal and offers plenty of [tax breaks for restaurants](#). These may include food and beverage costs and charitable donations.

7. Train your team.

You can't run a restaurant on your own. You're going to need a well-trained – and well-compensated – team to help you keep your business afloat. Make a point to [cross train](#) your staff. This offers numerous benefits including giving each an understanding of other departments' roles and making sure you always have someone that can cover on those inevitable days when you're short staffed.

8. Shop local.

Food is expensive and the best way to lower your cost is to [source locally](#). Farmers market and even private gardens are an exceptional resource for produce that hasn't been shipped in from another country. Fresh garden fare is healthier and considerably more flavorful and your customers can taste the difference.

9. Initiate community outreach.

Once your business is established and you begin to get your name out there, continue to do so by creating [community outreach](#) programs. You might, for instance, donate your daily leftovers to a women's shelter or provide snacks to a local school's faculty once per month. Not only does outreach have an impact on your community, but it's also an effective marketing strategy that's grossly underutilized.

10. Ask for help when you need it.

While it may seem like a no-brainer, many new restaurateurs don't realize that help is just a phone call away. Contact your local Chamber of Commerce or [restaurant association](#) if you have questions on how to navigate the tumultuous world of small business ownership.

Starting a business is a risk. But it comes with many rewards as long as you're willing to put in the effort, are smart about your money and know when you need to ask for help.





GREAT PLAINS GROWERS CONFERENCE & TRADE SHOW

January 10-12, 2019

Missouri Western State University, St. Joseph, Missouri

This is the conference where MVGA holds their annual business meeting

**For current updates about the conference register
www.greatplainsgrowersconference.org**

Missouri Vegetable Growers Association

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