

New guide will help home-gardeners interpret soil tests

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A new guide is available to help home gardeners interpret soil test reports and determine fertilizer rates.

"Fall can be a good time to get a soil test for your garden or yard, so you have the information you need the following spring," says Clain Jones, Extension soil fertility specialist in the Department of Land Resources and Environmental Sciences. "Soil testing may be the only way to determine if either depleted or excessive levels of nutrients exist in a home garden," he added.

"Understanding and interpreting soil test reports is important because a soil test provides the soil nutrient levels needed to determine specific fertilizer rates," said Jones. Although soil test results may include a fertilizer recommendation, out-of-state labs often do not use Montana guidelines and some laboratories that specialize in agricultural soil testing will not provide a recommendation for a garden. To assist in the interpretation of a report and to help determine fertilizer amounts, a new MontGuide, "Home Garden Soil Testing and Fertilizer Guidelines" (MT200705AG), is available. An example fertilizer calculation is included in the guide.

Understanding a little more about the nutrients that help lawns, shrubs, trees, and vegetables grow should make the home owner's yard more attractive and their garden more productive.

For copies of the MontGuides, please refer to the Web at <http://www.montana.edu/wwwpb/pubs/indexag.html#Fertilizers>. To order printed copies, please call Extension Publications at (406) 994-3273 or visit [http://www.montana.edu/wwwpb/com_serv/\\$order.html](http://www.montana.edu/wwwpb/com_serv/$order.html). Contact your local MSU Extension agent for help with your soil test results for specific fertilizer decisions. You can find a list of local offices and personnel at: <http://extn.msu.montana.edu/localoffices.asp> .