

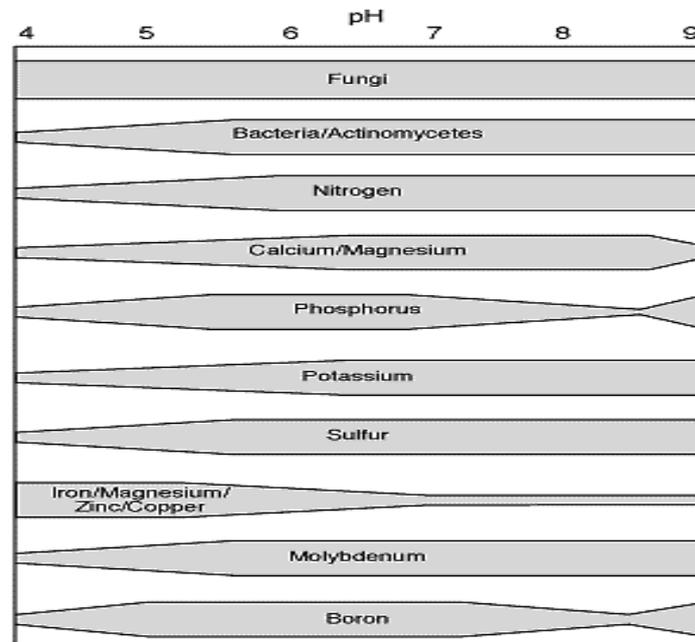
GROMOR OCTOBER 2015 NEWSLETTER

At this time of the year I regularly get asked for advice on what fertilizer to use on different plants. Whilst 2.3.2 and 2.3.4 remain the most popular general fertilizers, the question is valid, as different plants do use MORE of some and LESS of other PLANT FOOD ELEMENTS, hence there are different fertilizers catering for different plants e.g. GRASS requires high NITROGEN for that lush, dark green growth, consequently LAWN FERTILIZER is high in NITROGEN (e.g. the first number in 4.1.1) whilst LAN, contains only NITROGEN. If you're growing a "soft" fruit or vege, prone to disease attack, ensure that there is adequate POTASSIUM in the fertilizer (e.g. 5.1.5 or 2.3.4 – potassium represented by the last number) as potassium strengthens plant cells, making them more resistant to disease attack. PHOSPHATE is deficient in virtually all our soils, but is required in relatively small amounts. In compound fertilizer, phosphate is represented by the middle number (e.g. the 1 in 5.1.5 and 4.1.1 and 3 in 2.3.2 and 2.3.4). SUPERPHOSPHATE, generally used when starting a new garden, contains only PHOSPHATE and is applied at 30g/m²

Unfortunately it is not as simple as just supplying the plant nutrients required, as soil acidity (measured by pH and/or ACID SATURATION), greatly effects the plant's ability to take up nutrients from the soil. This is clearly reflected in the table below.

pH THE NEGLECTED FACTOR
EFFECT OF SOIL ACIDITY ON PLANT NUTRIENT AVAILABILITY

Relationships existing in soils between pH on the one hand and the activity of microorganisms and the availability of plant nutrients on the other.



AVAILABILITY (uptake) means just that! The thickness of the "line" is relative to the plants uptake ability e.g. even where there is an abundance of molybdenum, boron, phosphate, potassium etc. in the soil, plants will suffer a deficiency of these elements, if soil pH is under 4,5.

Whilst the general recommendation is to aim for a pH of between 6 and 7, I personally feel that aiming for a pH much above 6 in our KZN soils is unrealistic. Rather go for between 5,6 and 6,4 as they do in hydroponic nutrient solutions.

If you have applied regular dressings of NITROGEN RICH FERTILIZERS, (e.g. 4.1.1, LAN, AMMONIUM SULPHATE etc.) but neglected to MAINTAIN SOIL ORGANIC MATTER by NOT applying compost annually and NOT applying lime every 3 years, then your soil is likely to be acid.

I cannot leave any discussion on soil acidity without mentioning the lesser known ACID SATURATION, which is an alternate soil acidity measure to pH. It does require a fairly sophisticated soil analysis, as done at Cedara and is used mainly by farmers.

Acid Sat <10 no problem – fertilize normally

Acid Sat 10-20 problems starting – time to start counter measures

Acid Sat >20 you have a problem requiring immediate intervention to reduce acidity, if you expect results from your fertilizer programme!

Agriculture – where does SA stand?

In the 1970's SA was home to ± 2 million farm workers, which had dropped to ±700,000 by 2014, a drop which has contributed significantly to the country's UNEMPLOYMENT currently standing at ±25%, probably representing ±10 million people.

South Africa's average rainfall of less than 500mm per annum measured against the world average of 860mm, does not make farming in South Africa easy!

Land redistribution has not been successful, with only 7,5% of the land targeted for black people having been transferred, of which only ±10% is being successfully farmed.

The area planted to grain crops in South Africa decreased significantly between 1970 and 2013. Maize area planted decreased from about 5 million hectares to ±3 million hectares and wheat decreased from about ±2 million to ±500 000 ha.

Whilst the impact of the decrease was to some extent countered by greater productivity (cultural practices, GMO's and fertilizing mainly), it was not enough to keep up with growing demand, resulting in S.A. now having to import ±50% of our wheat requirements.

Regards,

GROMOR (PTY) LTD

R. HAGEN

I've run out of original jokes, but was recently reminded of what my Norwegian father, who never learned to speak Afrikaans, used to say when he'd had a few drinks and which embarrassed my mother terribly!!

"What did Adam say to Eve?"

"Ek het jou leaf"

But in all seriousness, if life were logical, it would have been men and not women who rode sidesaddle!

I've just heard this one and can sympathise, as I regularly get calls from my wife asking:

Where I am, what I'm doing etc.?

A senior citizen called her husband during his drive home: "Herman, I just heard on the news that there's a car going the wrong way up the N1, please be careful!"

He responds: "it's not just one car. There are hundreds of them!"