SOIL TEST INFORMATION SHEET NO. H-860

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Shrubs

1. The recommended pH range for the majority of shrubs grown in Louisiana landscapes is 5.5-6.5. Shrubs that prefer a pH range at the lower end of this scale are referred to as acid-loving (examples: camellias, gardenias, azaleas, wax myrtles, hydrangea). Other shrubs will grow best at the upper end of this pH range. In general, a pH near 6 is appropriate for most shrubs in the Louisiana landscape.

2. Shrubs are generally fertilized once per year. This should be done during late winter or early spring (March-May). Evenly distribute the fertilizer under the spread of the plant and “water in" if the soil is dry. Avoid fertilizer placement next to the stems or shoots of the shrubs as this can "burn" shrubs.

3. Avoid "Weed n' Feed" fertilizer applications until fertilizer timing occurs (i.e. early spring (March-May)). Applying weed n' feed materials too early can cause undesirable spring leaf-out.

4. Select a complete, slow-release fertilizer and apply fertilizer at the rate of 1-2 pounds of nitrogen per $1000ft^2$ of landscape bed area. Camellia and azalea specific fertilizers are good to use for certain acid-loving shrubs. Avoid using 34-0-0 (ammonium nitrate) in shrub fertilization. Balanced fertilizers, such as 8-8-8 or 13-13-13, can be used, but it is best to utilize complete, slow-release types.

5. Unless phosphorus and\or potassium levels are inadequate in the soil (as determined by a soil test), use a complete fertilizer with a 3:1:2 or 3:1:3 ratio (e.g. 12-4-8 or 15-5-15). A 3:1:2 fertilizer contains 3 parts nitrogen, 1 part phosphorus as P_2O_5, and 2 parts potassium as K_2O.

6. Foliar applications of iron or application of a slow-release granular iron fertilizer, such as Ironite, can correct foliar iron nutrient deficiencies.

7. Raise soil pH to a recommended level with the addition of dolomitic limestone or agricultural limestone. Note that it may take weeks to months to see changes occur.

8. Lower soil pH to a recommended level by adding aluminum sulfate or elemental sulfur. Note that it may take weeks to months to see changes occur.

9. Contact your county agent for additional information and help in your fertilization program. The agent also receives a copy of this report for the parish office files.

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