

Soil Test Considerations

Soil pH

- **pH measures how acidic or basic (acidity or alkalinity)**
- **Scale range is 1-14**
- **Neutral pH is 7**
- **Optimum for most vegetable growing is 6.3 to 6.8**
- **The pH level affects mineral availability of soil**
- **To lower pH, add one of the following**
 1. **livestock manure**
 2. **decayed pine needles**
 3. **oak leaf mold**
 4. **peat moss**
 5. **cottonseed meal**
- **To raise pH: use lime (calcitic or dolomitic but not hydrated lime)**
- **Or substitute lime with one of the following:**
 1. **wood ash—apply only a dusting**
 2. **crushed oyster shells**
 3. **marl**

*Remember that adjusting soil pH is a gradual process over 1-3 years.
Use compost/compost tea to adjust faster and offer a buffering effect.*

Soil Testing - a Summary

Tests and labs vary widely. Do future tests with same lab.

Test the first year.

Then test every 2nd or 3rd year .

Add compost yearly (an excellent soil neutralizer, stabilizer, and fertilizer)

Replenish nutrients yearly with moderate applications of organic fertilizers.

Don't overdo fertilizers

Foster a healthy soil food web with leaf or grass mulches

Decrease your dependence on imported fertilizers.

After all is said and done...

Since tests vary widely by methods of analysis,

–choose an organic evaluation

--stay with the same lab over the years

However...

- **There is no substitute for replenishing of basic nutrients**
- **There is no substitute for replacing organic matter**
- **There is no substitute for a healthy soil food web**

