
Herbs

Management Highlights

- Target pH: 6.8
- Add compost, humus, peat moss or other organic material to enrich the soil.

Introduction

Herbs are becoming more popular for use in the home garden or landscape. Herbs have many uses: in the cooking, as components of potpourri, as cut or dried flowers and as ornamentals in the garden. With a minimum of attention, herbs can be a pleasing addition to the landscape.

Soil pH and Liming

The target pH for most herbs on Delaware soils is **6.8**. When at all possible, soil pH problems should be corrected prior to establishing perennial herbs, since lime application will be more difficult once the planting is established. The lime recommendation for a particular site is calculated from the soil pH and buffer pH measurements using the steps outlined in *Calculating the Lime Requirement -- Chapter 4, Section 4.4*.

In most cases, the lime requirement can be met by either calcitic or dolomitic limestone. *Dolomitic limestone* is recommended if:

- soil test Mg is less than 50 FIVs, or
- soil test Mg is between 50 and 100 FIVs *and less than soil test Ca*.

Calcitic limestone is recommended if:

- soil test Mg is greater than 100 FIVs, or
- soil test Mg is between 50 and 100 FIVs *and greater than soil test Ca*.

Lime should be applied in the fall. Do not spread more than 50 lbs lime/1000 square feet at a time. If more than 50 lbs/1000 square feet has been recommended, make two or more treatments of 40-50 lbs each several months apart until the full rate has been applied.

Nutrient Recommendations

Most herbs do well when soil fertility is low. Fertilization of herbs is not recommended. Rather, soils should be enriched with organic materials such as composts, manures, humus or peat moss.

Over time, these materials will decompose and add sufficient nutrients to the soil to meet the needs of the herbs.

Additional Information

See Soil Test Notes 1 and 13 (Appendix APP-7) Extension Bulletin #154: *The Care of Ornamental Plants – Delaware Home Gardeners Manual* for additional information about nutrient management of herbs.