

UNH Cooperative Extension Info Line Question of the Week



Question. Why do I need to apply lime to my lawn?

Answer. Lime is applied directly to the soil of your lawn to increase the soil pH. Soil pH, a measure of the soil's acidity or alkalinity, can directly influence the vigor and quality of your lawn. Here in the humid, eastern United States rainfall exceeds 40 inches per year, leaching basic or alkaline-forming ions such as calcium and magnesium from the soil. This results in an acid soil condition which restricts the growth of turf. The optimum pH level for turf is in the 6.0 to 6.5 range. Keep in mind that lime should not be applied unless a soil test indicates that it is needed. Too much lime can be as harmful as too little, causing potential trace element deficiencies.

Making the limestone application is simple. Use either a drop spreader or a rotary spreader. Uniform coverage is the key as lime is very insoluble and essentially stays where it is put. To insure even coverage, one-half of the lime should be applied in one direction, and the remainder applied in a perpendicular (crisscross) direction.

It is often recommended that lime be applied in the fall to enable the material to begin raising the pH over the winter for the next season's growth. However, lime can be applied at any time of the year.

If you have not applied any lime for several years and are not able to do a soil test, a good rule of thumb would be to apply 40 to 50 lbs of lime per 1000 square feet.

Got questions? UNH Cooperative Extension Education Center's Info Line offers practical help finding answers for your lawn and garden questions. Call toll free at 1-877-398-4769, M-F, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., or e-mail us at answers@unh.edu