

David G. Hallauer  
District Extension Agent  
Crops & Soils/Horticulture

### ***Zone Soil Testing of Forage Stands***

Forage stands aren't traditionally soil tested as intensely as crop fields. Yield monitoring isn't as precise and return on investment to sampling isn't as easy to see. Still, it doesn't hurt to review field histories to see if at least some increase in testing intensity shouldn't be considered.

Conditions this summer have provided one opportunity to see field differences. In many cases, a field's thinnest soils have become easy to see during this summer's dry stretches. If those droughty areas match up with areas traditionally lower in production, it may be a good place to consider 'zone' sampling. Take samples from within the lower production areas and compare them to samples pulled from more average areas. If fertility differences show up, then you can start to manage accordingly. If not, other factors can then be considered.

If noticeable differences don't stand out, check out soil type and productivity differences using the NRCS Websoil Survey: <https://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/HomePage.htm>. Separately soil sampling soils of varying productivity can help determine if fertility differences also exist and need attention.

Sampling field wise typically does a pretty good job of giving us a good number on which to base fertilizer application decisions. If you aren't soil sampling already, now is a great time to start, and field scale sampling is a great place to start. If you've got a sampling program in place already, zone sampling may help you fine tune your application program a little more.

Next week, I'll share a little more about accurate sampling. In the meantime, if you want to discuss potential zone sampling soil test programs, drop me a line at [dhallaue@ksu.edu](mailto:dhallaue@ksu.edu) or contact any of our Meadowlark Extension District Offices.

### ***Spring Flowering Shrub Management***

Spring blooming shrubs are often a much-anticipated welcome to spring after a long winter. They're the first color of the year, and that means we want them to show well – and that means management now.

If you've got spring flowering shrubs (Forsythia, Flowering Quince, Almond, Beautybush, Deutzia, Pyracantha, Lilac, Mock Orange, Cotoneaster, Weigela, Viburnum and Witchhazel, etc...), they're likely setting flower buds from now through September. Because of this effort on the plant's part to provide us with spring color, our job is to provide soil moisture when adequate rainfall is sparse. Avoid watering frequently, but consider a good deep soaking periodically until soil moisture levels are replenished.

Avoid pruning as well. If you have dead wood, removal of those shoots isn't a problem. Pruning now to shape spring flowering shrubs, however, will likely result in reduced bloom.

Just because flowering is done for the season, doesn't mean management is. Start getting spring flowering shrubs ready to show their stuff with a little TLC this fall.