



# Making a Difference

2016 – 2017

## Horticulture Program Focus Team Kansas Healthy Yards and Communities

### Grand Challenges

K-State Research and Extension: providing education you can trust to help people, businesses, and communities solve problems, develop skills, and build a better future.

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### Situation

Healthy yards benefit communities by increasing property values, providing healthful foods and improving soil health. Properly applied fertilizer helps produce healthy, productive plants. With necessary nutrients, plants have better resistance to pests and drought. Turfgrass, vegetable, and flower gardens as well as trees and shrubs thrive with proper soil nutrients. Applying only what the plant needs assures that homeowners and landowners use their monetary resources wisely. Excessive nutrient applications can damage soil organisms, aquatic systems, and prevent the availability of other nutrients for plant growth.

### What We Did

K-State Research and Extension offices across the state offer soil-testing services to determine plant requirements. Throughout the year, agents and specialists promote the importance of soil sampling through media, newsletters, public outreach at garden shows, presentations, and websites. Many local offices offer grant funds to offset testing expenses. Soil testing is recommended at the beginning of a project, then every three to five years.

### Outcomes

Clients learn the importance of soil testing to ensure healthy living environments. More than 5,000 homeowners annually submit soil tests and receive fertilizer recommendations. Because commercial fertilizers are priced by how many nutrients are included, testing gives clients the information to save money by purchasing fertilizers with fewer nutrients, which are often three times less expensive. Soil tests showing adequate amounts of potassium and phosphorus usually don't require additional fertilizer applications. Applying only necessary amounts of phosphorus reduces harmful runoff and helps maintain water quality. Excessive phosphorus in lakes and reservoirs can cause blue-green algae or algal blooms, which are harmful to humans and animals.

The Kansas Healthy Yards and Communities website, [kansashealthyyards.org](http://kansashealthyyards.org), provides information on the importance of healthy soil, helpful videos, and timely advice on common plant problems in Kansas.

### Success Story

Homeowners and landowners rely on soil test results. Here are a few comments:

“Since I tested my soil, I no longer guess at which fertilizer to purchase.”

“It is a relief to know that I own pretty good soil for my gardening desires.”



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