SOIL TEST INFORMATION SHEET NO. V-390

Prepared by Extension Horticulturist James Boudreaux

Hot Peppers, Bell peppers and Eggplants

1. These crops, especially peppers, are extremely sensitive to strongly acid soils. Production normally is severely reduced when soil pH is an\bout 5.0 or below. Apply agricultural limestone if soil pH is below 5.5. On soils low in magnesium, use dolomitic limestone. Apply lime 2 to 6 months before planting.

2. Apply about ½ the total nitrogen required, 80 to 120 pounds per acre, and all the phosphorus and potassium fertilizer before transplanting into the field. Band application is usually more efficient than broadcast applied fertilizer. Place fertilizer bands below and to the side of the transplant to avoid fertilizer burn.

3. **Sidedress nitrogen applications:**

    Calcium nitrate can be used as a source of sidedressing nitrogen to supply calcium in addition to nitrogen.

    Hot Peppers: Apply 30-80 pounds nitrogen as sidedressing when the plants begin to set fruit and again 4-6 weeks later when the first fruit mature, and again in 4 to 6 weeks.

    Bell Peppers: Apply 20-40 pounds nitrogen as sidedressing when plants begin to set fruit and again in 2 to 3 weeks.

    Eggplant: Apply 30-80 pounds nitrogen as sidedressing when plants begin to set fruit. Apply an additional sidedressing after harvest of eggplant begins. Another sidedressing 3-4 weeks after the second will be beneficial in prolonging the harvest period.

4. Blossom end rot can result from excess nitrogen, moisture stress, low soil calcium or a combination of these factors.

5. Peppers and eggplant grown with drip irrigation can be sidedressed by injecting nitrogen fertilizer with the irrigation water. This process is called fertigation. Inject 10 to 12 pounds of nitrogen per acre per week. Start fertigation 2-3 weeks after planting and continue for 12-14 weeks.

6. Contact your county agent for additional information and help in your fertilization program. The agent also receives a copy of this report for the parish office files.