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Soil Fertility the Topic of Coffee Shop Meeting

According to the most recent KSU Farm Management Association budgets, fertility costs comprise about 12 percent of the soybean budget and 20 to 25 percent of the corn budget costs. That means two things: fertility is important in these two crops and when profit margins get tight, they will be one of the first things evaluated!

With an eye to evaluating your 2015 fertility program during the growing season so you can make decisions for the 2016 growing season and beyond, K-State Research & Extension Atchison County and the Meadowlark Extension District are teaming up for a coffee shop meeting solely focused on fertility with KSU Soil Fertility Specialist Dr. Dave Mengel.

The meeting will be held in two locations on Thursday, February 25th, 2016. The first meeting will start at 8:30 at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Nortonville with a second meeting starting at 1:00 p.m. in the small meeting room of the Nemaha County Community Building in Seneca. Both meetings will be informal discussions about soil fertility management practices and what producers might want to evaluate to further tweak their management program. Bring your questions and stay to hear about how to best manage your soil fertility resource.

Light refreshments will be served. To ensure an adequate supply, please RSVP by noon on February 24th. You can do so to Meadowlark Extension District Offices in Oskaloosa at (785) 863-2212 or Seneca at (785) 336-2184 or the Atchison County Extension Office at (913) 833-5450. You can also e-mail me at dhallae@ksu.edu. Hope to see you there!

Grain Marketing Meeting – February 24th

Last reminder! KSU Extension Economist Dr. Dan O'Brien will be our guest at a Grain Marketing Workshop on Wednesday, February 24th at the Leavenworth County Fairgrounds in Tonganoxie. Doors open at 12:30 with Dr. O'Brien on at 1:00 p.m. Hope to see you there!

What a Soil Test Does Not Tell You

While I'm a big advocate for soil testing to identify nutrient needs, soil tests don't always tell the entire story about fruit and vegetable crop performance – or the lack thereof! Other issues affect plant growth as well.

Lack of sun might be the issue, since flowering (and fruiting) plants need six to eight hours of full sun per day in most cases.

All the nutrients in the world won't overcome poor oxygen or the inability of plant roots to extract water from a tight clay soil. Shallow soils with good fertility may not support plant growth as well. Excess fertilizer can be an issue, too, since they interfere with nutrient uptake.

Allelopathy from other plants could be an issue. Walnuts trees are quite toxic to some plants, tomatoes in particular.

Tree roots need moisture, nutrients, and sun just like plants, but if they are well established, they'll likely get 'fed' first!

Watering could also be an issue. Too much. Too little. Even watering at the wrong time of day can cause growth and development problems often attributed to nutrient deficiencies.

Does that mean skip the soil test? No way! Instead, take a little time as you are taking the sample – and analyzing the results – to look for other reasons that plant growth might be compromised. Then, plan to amend with nutrients and other practices to correct.