

Home/Garden

Using natural fertilizers

Mother Nature sustains us all. She is full of life and vitality, and as her children, it's important for us to do our bit to care for her. As we protect her health, so we provide for our own well-being. Yet, just as a person cannot maintain vigor for any period of time on a diet of glucose and vitamin pills, our earth will not remain healthy on a continual diet of 5-10-5 chemical fertilizer.

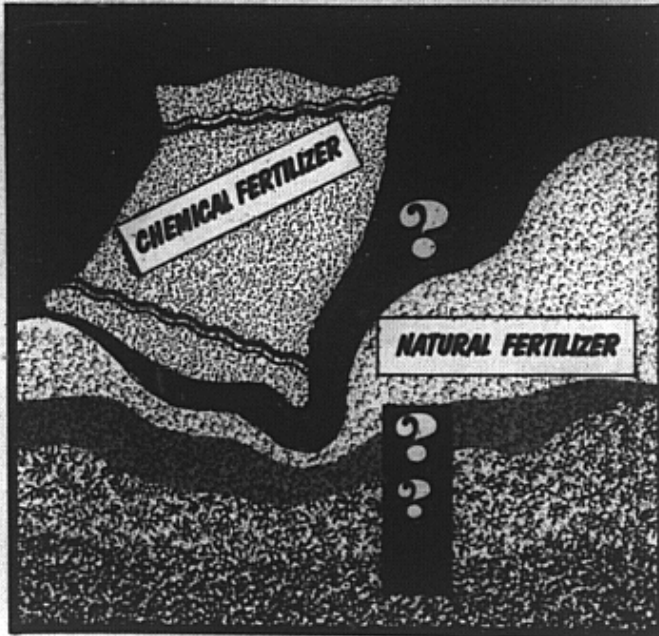
When we see fertilizers at the garden center and notice that they are labeled 5-10-5 or 10-10-10 or whatever, we are being given information about the three major nutrients contained in the formula. Nitrogen (N) comes first in the formula, then phosphorus (P) and finally potassium or potash (K).

Nitrogen is important for the healthy and rapid growth of crop foliage. You can have too much nitrogen and find you have a crop that is all lush foliage and no fruit. However, this is much more likely to happen with chemical fertilizer than with natural fertilizers. I know of people who are afraid of putting too much manure on their gardens for this reason, but while rotted manure is a good all-round fertilizer, it doesn't have an exceptionally high nitrogen content. Dried blood, bone meal and cotton meal are all high in nitrogen.

Phosphorous is usually present in sufficient quantity in the soil, but if the soil is either too acid or too alkaline, it will be insoluble and therefore unavailable to plants.

The availability of other nutrients like calcium is also affected by pH. Soil is very important to have your soil's acidity tested. In New England our soil tends to be acid, with a pH of less than 7. Alkaline soils have a pH of more than 7 with 14 being the highest measure possible. Testing your soil's pH and correcting it so that it falls within the 6 range will make your soil more fertile even before you add any other fertilizers.

If your soil has a proper pH and tests indicate that you still need phosphorous, rock phosphate which releases its phosphorous slowly over a long period of time is a good fertilizer.



Recorder/Lucia Russon

Pat
Leuchtman

Between
The Rows



You can have too much nitrogen and find you have a crop that is all lush foliage and no fruit.

Other natural fertilizers including compost and rotted manure will supply phosphorous as well as other nutrients. These organic materials also feed and encourage the microbial

life in the soil.

Phosphorous is important to encourage healthy growth, strong roots, disease resistance and good fruit development. If your soil is deficient, you'll notice that your plants will grow slowly and will have red or purplish areas on the leaves. This may be particularly noticeable as red streaks on corn stalks and on the underside of tomato leaves.

Potassium (K), the final macronutrient, will combat the problems that arise with an overabundance of nitrogen and is important in the plant's manufacture of sugar. It also helps plants survive dry spells and increases disease resistance. Granite dust and greensand are the richest sources of potassium, but all the elements that you would commonly use in your compost pile, manure, table scraps, hay, grass clippings and leaves will all provide some measure of potassium.

Obviously, compost is an important natural fertilizer and this makes sense. Plants take nutrients out of



The Recorder

Is Available At The Following Locations Throughout Franklin County And The Surrounding Area.

GREENFIELD

- RITE AID
Mahawk Trail
- BARRETT & BAKER NO. 2
242 Main St.
- BIG Y
Mahawk Trail
- CVS
Cherry Rum Plaza
- J.C.'S MARKET
247 Conway St.
- GALVIN'S PACKAGE STORE
27 Ames St.
- PETE'S
271 Federal St.
- RITE AID
154 Main St.
- STOP & SHOP
Cherry Rum Plaza
- HARPER'S PACKAGE STORE
404 Colrain Rd.
- BARRETT & BAKER NO. 1
310 Main St.
- CANDLELIGHT MOTEL
208 Mahawk Trail
- CORSIGLIA PACKAGE STORE
70 Main St.
- SULLIVAN'S DRUG STORE
233 Main St.
- CALL'S CORNER
122 Conway St.
- CUMBERLAND FARMS
Federal St.
- CUMBERLAND FARMS
49 Main St.
- CUBBY HOLE
63 French King Hwy.
- DAIRY MART
341 Federal St.
- VALLEY FARMS STORE
4 Mill St.
- HOWARD JOHNSON'S REST.
141 Mahawk Trail
- HOWARD JOHNSON'S LODGE
125 Mahawk Trail
- INKWELL NEWSSTAND
72 Federal St.
- SUPER JOHN'S MARKET
146 Federal St.
- FOSTER'S MARKET
Conway & Allen Sts.
- RUGGERI'S SHOPPING CENTER
402 Federal St.

NORTHFIELD

- AL'S CONVENIENCE STORE
60 Main Street
 - IGA
76 Main St.
 - NORTHFIELD COUNTRY STORE
Main St.
 - S & W TEXACO
Main St.
- ### CONWAY
- BAKER'S COUNTRY STORE
River St.
- ### SOUTH DEERFIELD
- SUGARLOAF MARKET
131 Main St.
 - DEERFIELD SPIRIT
103 Main St.
 - FRONTIER PHARMACY
23 Sugarloaf St.
 - THAYER ST. MARKET
53 Thayer St.
 - CUMBERLAND FARMS
21 Sugarloaf St.
 - NEIGHBOR'S CONV.

SUNDERLAND

- COMMISSO'S MARKET
Main St.
- SEVEN-ELEVEN
Route 116
- BILLY'S BEER & WINE
Route 116
- GRAMPY'S CORNER STORE
Route 116
- SUNDERLAND PKG. STORE
Route 116

WHATLEY

- GAY'S PACKAGE STORE
State Rd.
- SHELL DELI
Route 116
- WHATLEY GENERAL STORE
State Rd.

DEERFIELD

- KEG & KORK PACKAGE
State Rd.
- DEERFIELD INN
Main St.
- SAVAGE MARKET
State Rd.
- SODA HAUS
State Rd.

AMHERST

- CUSHMAN GENERAL STORE
491 Pine St.
- AUGIE'S TOBACCO SHOP
108 N. Pleasant St.
- MINI FOOD BASKET
255 Triangle St.
- HASTINGS NEWSSTAND
45 S. Pleasant St.
- STUDENT UNION MINI
UMass Campus Center Store
- BROOK'S DISCOUNT
23 Montague Rd.
- CUMBERLAND FARMS
Montague Rd.
- WATROBA'S
80 Sunderland Rd.
- CUMBERLAND FARMS
385 College St.
- JANE ALDEN DAIRY STORE
324 College St.
- LOUIS MARKET
10 University Drive

ORANGE

- PIONEER VARIETY
420 East River St.
- XTRA MART
272 S. Main
- CARROLL'S MARKET
58 S. Main
- CUMBERLAND FARMS
E. Main St.
- THOMPSON'S STATIONERY
6 W. Main St.
- DONELAN'S SUPERMARKET
213 E. Main St.
- ORANGE PHARMACY
5 So. Main St.
- DANIEL SHAYS CONVENIENCE
75 Daniel Shays Highway
- JOHNSON'S PACKAGE STORE
56 South Main St.

ERVING

- ERVING COUNTRY STORE
Erving Center

HADLEY

- SUPER STOP & SHOP
Route 9
- CUMBERLAND FARMS
Route 9

NORTHAMPTON

- 11707'S TOBACCO SHOP

Don't waste — compost!