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MAKING FERTILIZER COMPARISONS BASED UPON PRICE

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Careful selection and comparison of fertilizer materials is becoming more important with increasing prices and the number of materials available. The most crucial step in making a fertilizer comparison is converting the prices of different materials to equal units such as price per pound of nitrogen, phosphorus, or potassium. In order to make these conversions, there are a few pieces of information about each product that are needed.

- * Cost per unit weight (for solids) or volume (for liquids)
- * Material nutrient analysis (N-P-K)
- * Density or specific gravity (for liquids)

Since materials have different material analysis, comparing the price per ton of two different fertilizers does not indicate

which is the most economical. In order to compare two different fertilizers they must be placed on an even playing field to make a meaningful comparison. If the materials could be expressed in price per pound of the nutrient, direct comparisons could be made. To determine the price per pound of a fertilizer source two things must be known – 1) the price per ton of the fertilizer and 2) the nutrient analysis of the fertilizer. Assume urea (46-0-0) can be purchased for \$500 per ton and anhydrous ammonia (82-0-0) can be purchased for \$1020 per ton, which material is the cheapest?

$$\text{Material price per ton} = \frac{\text{Nutrient cost (\$/lb of nutrient)}}{2000 \times \text{Material analysis (percent)}}$$

Using this equation, the urea

would cost \$0.54 per pound, and the anhydrous ammonia would cost \$0.62 per pound. Obviously, in this instance urea is the cheaper of the two sources.

Liquid fertilizers add to the complexity of comparisons because not all fertilizer materials are marketed on a weight basis, some are sold by volume (especially starter forms of material). This can lead to confusion when attempting to determine the price per pound of a nutrient when the price is in price per volume (\$/gallons typically). Each material that is sold should have a value known as specific gravity (density). This is the weight in pounds for each gallon of the material (pounds per gallon). To determine the price per pound of a nutrient for liquid materials, divide the price per gallon of material by the specific gravity multiplied by the material nutrient

ESTATE TAXES & SUCCESSION PLANNING FOR YOUR AGRICULTURE OPERATION



What is farm estate planning? How much money do you need to retire? Will estate tax impact my family farm? What about life insurance? Planning for the future can be challenging. It can be especially challenging when you have an agriculture operation to pass down. If you have these questions, it is important for you to participate in a workshop that addresses these issues.

With the availability of a planning grant, the Purdue Women in Ag team offered 3 regional meetings in February to address these issues. One is planned for Northern Indiana for February 18th the site is yet to be determined but please mark your calendar for this event.

These hands-on, interactive workshops are designed to help you address the challenges of making your farm operation viable for the next generation.

Some of the workshop outcomes in the past were: Increased knowledge of the legal aspects of Estate Planning. Determine the liquidity of the farm operation for payment of estate tax and transfer of farm assets. Understand the human side of estate planning and family needs. Increased knowledge of retirement needs of the older generation.

PRIVATE APPLICATORS: PARP MEETINGS BEFORE YEARS END!

Some of you may be needing PARP credit before the end of the year. There are a few opportunities in northern Indiana in December:

- 11/24/08— Fulton Co Fairgrounds, 1 pm EST
- 12/2/08—Beef House (Bi-State Workshop), 9:00 am EST
- 12/5/08—Blue Gate Restaurant Shipshewanna 9:00 am EST
- 12/15/08—PARP, Central IN Power, Greenfield, 7:45 am EST
- 12/19/08—PARP, Howard Co Gov't bldg, Kokomo, 9:00 am EST

You can check <http://www.btny.purdue.edu/PPP/PARP/> for a more

recently updated list or call our office for more information on any of these programs contact our office at 866-5741.

You can also take one program on the internet at <http://www.btny.purdue.edu/PPP/PARP/Onlinehome.html>

If you do not have internet capabilities please contact me and arrangements can be made at our office. Please contact me if you have any questions on your Point status. You must have complete 3 trainings over a 5 year period and no more than 2 in one year.

EXPERT OFFERS TIPS ON SELECTING & CARING FOR CHRISTMAS TREES



Today's consumers are putting up their Christmas trees earlier than in years past, and this makes tree selection and care more important than ever, says Daniel Cassens, Purdue University professor of forestry and owner of a choose-and-cut Christmas tree business.

"Now it's not uncommon to see trees going up before Thanksgiving," Cassens says. "Some of our customers tell us that the family's all together on Thanksgiving, so they want to make a family event of putting the tree up on that holiday." Cassens says that putting a tree up in November or early December can work if homeowners select the proper variety and take proper care of the tree.

Cassens offers these tips for selecting and setting up a Christmas tree:

Select a good tree. If you are going to put your tree up early, avoid spruce trees, Cassens said, warning that these trees dry out faster and will drop their needles quicker than other varieties.

"If you are going to cut your own tree, you should know that if a tree is close to the woods it will have a side that is full that is facing the sun and a backside that is thin," Cassens said. "Those trees will tend to tip over as well."

Cassens also suggested that people be careful to select the proper size of tree. "Don't overdo it, because when the trees are in the field they don't look as big as they will once they get in the house," he said. "We like to joke that the

trees tend to grow as they go through the front door."

Pick the freshest tree you can find. Test the tree by grabbing the needles and gently pull them toward you. On a fresh tree, the needles will stay on the tree.

Don't be put off by a few brown needles, however. All trees have these, and Cassens suggested having the business put the tree in a shaker, which will dislodge all of the dead and loose needles. "It's an expensive piece of equipment, so not every Christmas tree business has one, but it really cleans up the trees well," he said.

Select a good place for the tree. The first consideration is accessibility to the tree. Beyond that, the tree should be kept away from heating registers, which may tend to dry out the tree, or fireplaces, which could ignite the tree with embers. "Actually, the chances of a well-cared for tree catching fire is pretty slim, but you should obviously take precautions," Cassens said.

Select a proper tree stand. "There are a lot of cheap, lightweight tree stands on the market. You can even buy them in plastic now. Many of these aren't really adequate for a tree of any size at all," Cassens said. "If you have a seven- or eight-foot scotch pine, you've got a lot of weight there, and it's going to be difficult to keep the tree upright in a lightweight stand."

Cassens said that there are several good Christmas tree stands available. He recommended tree stands that have a five- or six-inch spike. With these stands, the Christmas tree business will drill a hole into the base of the trunk, and the tree fits down over the spike. Another good stand for a large tree uses guy wires that attach to screws drilled into the tree a couple of feet above the stand.

"On bigger trees we recommend that people try to tie them to a window frame or a wall with fishing line or fine wire. It really makes a difference on

those bigger trees," he said.

Make a fresh cut: Just before putting the tree in the stand, be sure to cut about one inch off the base of the tree. "Since pitch tends to seal the trunk off, this opens up new wood and the tree can absorb the water," Cassens said.

Keep the tree properly watered. "Most people understand this," Cassens said, "but it's easy to let a tree dry out. I've come close to doing it myself once or twice." Other than spruce trees, fresh trees that are well cared for should last for the entire holiday season, and a well-watered tree keeps its fragrance much longer.

Cassens said that trees require large amounts of water for the first week or two. Homeowners should check the tree at least once a day and probably more often for a larger tree. "What happens is the tree is dormant when they take it inside because it is winter," Cassens said. "When the tree is moved inside where it's warm, after a day or two the tree thinks it's spring and begins to grow. That's when they take up a tremendous amount of water."

If the tree stand runs out of water, the tree forms a cap of sap over the bottom of the trunk and no more water can move into the tree, which will cause the tree to dry out. If this happens, the tree should be taken out of the stand and a fresh cut made on the trunk.

According to the National Christmas Tree Association, research has shown that ordinary tap water works better at keeping a tree fresh than commercial products, home-brewed concoctions or distilled water. Average-sized Christmas trees can absorb up to a gallon of water a day.

Store the tree properly: If the tree isn't going to be used immediately, Cassens said it should be stored in a sheltered area in a bucket of water so that the wind and sun don't dry it out.

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