

## Soil Test Considerations

### *Soil pH*

- **pH measures how acidic or basic (acidity or alkalinity)**
- **Scale range is 1-14**
- **Neutral pH is 7**
- **Optimum for most vegetable growing is 6.3 to 6.8**
- **The pH level affects mineral availability of soil**
- **To lower pH, add one of the following**
  - " **livestock manure**
  - " **decayed pine needles**
  - " **oak leaf mold**
  - " **peat moss**
  - " **cottonseed meal**
- **To raise pH: use lime (calcitic or dolomitic but not hydrated lime)**
- ! **Or substitute lime with one of the following:**
  - " **wood ash—apply only a dusting**
  - " **crushed oyster shells**
  - " **marl**

*Remember that adjusting soil pH is a gradual process over 1-3 years.  
Use compost/compost tea to adjust faster and offer a buffering effect.*

## **Soil Testing - a Summary**

**Tests and labs vary widely. Do future tests with same lab.**

**Test the first year.**

**Then test every 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> year .**

**Add compost yearly (an excellent soil neutralizer, stabilizer, and fertilizer)**

**Replenish nutrients yearly with moderate applications of organic fertilizers.**

**Don't overdo fertilizers**

**Foster a healthy soil food web with leaf or grass mulches**

**Decrease your dependence on imported fertilizers.**

*After all is said and done...*

**Since tests vary widely by methods of analysis,**

**–choose an organic evaluation**

**--stay with the same lab over the years**

*However...*

- ▶ **There is no substitute for replenishing of basic nutrients**
- ▶ **There is no substitute for replacing organic matter**
- ▶ **There is no substitute for a healthy soil food web**

