

Basic Soil Test

Following is a brief description of the most common tests available. The section also has interpretation data from published¹ references or derived from our own database. Where applicable, cross references to our Technical Notes are also made.

pH

The soil pH is a measure of the acidity or alkalinity of the sample. It is important because of how it influences the chemical and physiological processes in the soil, and the availability of plant nutrients.

Figure 1 shows how pH can affect the availability of nutrients.

Level	Peat	Loam	Sandy
Very Low (acid)	4.0	5.0	5.0
Low	4.5 - 5.0	5.1 - 5.5	5.1 - 5.8
Medium	5.1 - 5.5	5.6 - 6.5	5.9 - 6.8
High	5.6 - 6.0	6.6 - 7.0	6.9 - 7.5
Very High (alkaline)	> 6.0	> 7.0	> 7.5

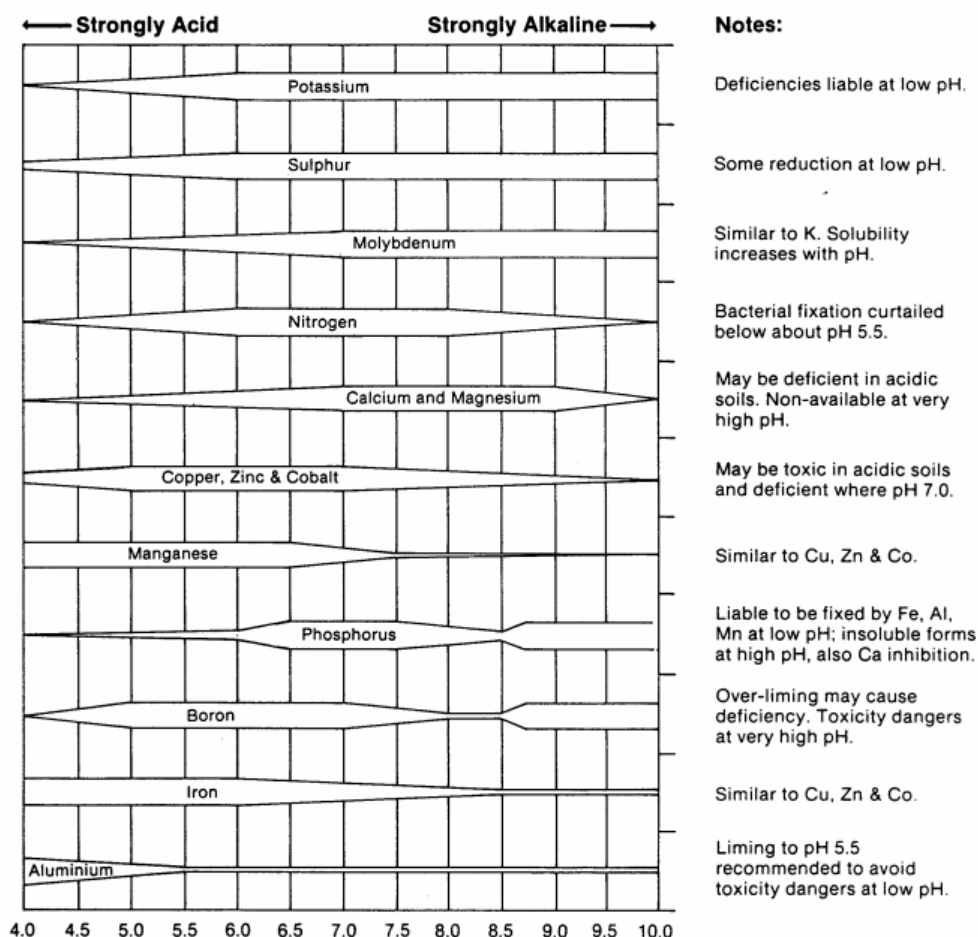


Figure 1: pH affects on plant availability of nutrients²

¹ Blakemore, L.C.; Searle, P.L.; Daly, B.K. 1987. Methods for chemical analysis of soils. New Zealand, NZ DSIR. (NZ Soil Bureau Scientific Report 80).

² From Truog, 1948