

Nitrogen (N) is essential to nearly every aspect of plant growth. We frequently get questions about nitrogen test results and recommendations, as well as testing opinions.

1. If Nitrogen is so important, why do I not see Nitrogen results on my report?

Plants absorb nitrogen as nitrate ( $\text{NO}_3^-$ ) and ammonium ( $\text{NH}_4^+$ ). Soil  $\text{NO}_3^-$  and  $\text{NH}_4^+$  levels can fluctuate widely with weather and soil conditions over very short time periods. For this reason, soil nitrogen testing is only useful for predicting immediate fertilizer needs.

Nitrogen recommendations are based on crop needs with the assumption that very little available N remains in the soil at the end of the growing season. Recommendations given reflect the amount of nitrogen needed for one growing season.

2. If I want to know my available nitrogen levels, what do I ask for?

Ask for...nitrate and ammonium.