

USE OF POULTRY LITTER ON VEGETABLES

¹ M. L. Baker and D. R. Earhart

Long Season Crops

Tomatoes and many other long season crops use only small amounts of plant food during early growth, but require relatively more during the second month and large amounts during the third month of growth. Much of the nitrogen in commercial fertilizer may have leached from the root zone before the plant begins this heavy uptake. The nitrogen in poultry manure becomes available more slowly and a considerable amount is still available toward the latter part of the growing season when the plant is using it in greater quantities.

Among the crops which make the most efficient use of poultry manure are tomatoes, sweet corn, pepper, eggplant, cantaloupe, cucumber, watermelon, squash, and pumpkin.

Leafy Greens

Quick growing, succulent greens such as spinach, kale, turnips, and cabbage seem to benefit by applications of poultry manure when they are planted as fall crops. They show less response to manure when planted in late winter or very early spring.

Asparagus, Potatoes, Sweetpotatoes

These crops do not respond as favorably to applications of manure, and in some instances, either the yield or quality may be reduced. Neither asparagus nor sweetpotatoes require large amounts of nitrogen, and the lack of response may be due to the fact that the relatively large proportion of nitrogen in poultry manure tends to throw the major nutrients out of balance.

There is some evidence that damage from scab of potatoes, and pox and scurf of sweetpotatoes may be increased by the use of manures, thus reducing the quality of the crop. It is preferred that manure be applied to some other crop in rotation or at least one year before planting potatoes.

Poultry manure may be highly beneficial to asparagus during the early life of the planting. Applications may be made in the initial preparation of the field for planting and during the first year or two thereafter. Avoid later applications of manure to asparagus.

Vegetable Gardens

Poultry manure can be valuable in the home garden, particularly in the small suburban garden where manures and organic matter are not plentiful and where cost is relatively less important.

¹ TAEX and TAES Horticulturists, TAMU Center, Overton

TABLE FOR CONVERTING RATE PER ACRE TO RATE PER SQUARE FOOT

2 TONS PER ACRE = 1 BUSHEL PER 500 SQ. FT.

1 TON PER ACRE = 1/2 BUSHEL PER 500 SQ. FT.

2/3 TON PER ACRE = 1 BUSHEL PER 1,500 SQ. FT.

1/2 TON PER ACRE = 1/2 BUSHEL PER 1,000 SQ. FT.

1/3 TON PER ACRE = 1/2 BUSHEL PER 1,500 SQ. FT.

Calculated for moist-crumblly to sticky consistency, or 50% moisture.