



November 25, 2011

## WEB SOIL TOOL

A phone call this week from a landowner reminded me about a newer tool available on the Internet that can be useful in many ways. It's the on-line web soil survey version 2.1. Instead of getting out the Saline County Soil Survey book and finding the page, scanning the page and e-mailing it to the landowner, the information is at your fingertips at your home computer. It's called the Web Soil Survey and can be found at: <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov>. It's a simple and powerful way to find soil information and on-line calculations can be obtained. Simply click on the green WSS button at the top of the page of the website to get started.

The Web Soil Survey (WSS) provides soil data and information produced by the National Cooperative Soil Survey. It is operated by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and provides access to the largest natural resource information system in the world. Since its beginning, the Web Soil Survey has attracted a wide array of on-line visitors from all over the world.

NRCS has soil maps and data available on-line for more than 95 percent of the nation's counties and anticipates having 100 percent in the near future. The site is updated and maintained on-line as the single authoritative source of soil survey information. Soil surveys are used by farmers, real estate agents, appraisers, land use planners, engineers and others who desire information about the soil resource. During the first few months of its existence, the site averaged about 1,000 users per day, but now the site has seen that number increase dramatically to about 4,000 per day.

One use of the tool is communication to others about soil capabilities on farms. You can zoom in on a particular farm or area of interest or simply enter the state and county. Better yet, use the tab to define your state, section, range and township number to zoom in quickly to your area of interest. There are web tools where you can draw or define the area of interest and the map provided will also have a detailed description of the soils and the acres of each soil type on that parcel.

## TIME TO MULCH SENSITIVE PLANTS

Winter mulching is recommended for strawberries, chrysanthemums and other perennials on the borderline of hardiness for our given area. For any perennials that you planted this fall mulching is a great way to prevent frost heave which can expose plant roots. Winter mulch should be put into place after plants are fully dormant and soils begin to freeze or night temperatures are consistently dropping into the 20's. Use a 12 inch layer of coarse mulch over the tops of plants. Encircling plants or beds with chicken wire and filling the chicken wire with coarse mulch, such as wood chips or leaves, works well.

When mulching and cutting back roses, pruning is not needed during the fall for shrub and hybrid tea roses. An exception is when some pruning is needed for a rose to fit beneath a winter protection method, such as a rose cone. Wait until April and then prune to remove winter killed wood. Add winter protection to roses when the soil begins to freeze or night temperatures are



consistently dropping into the 20's. A good mulching method is to encircle the rose with a chicken wire cage staked to hold it in place, than fill the cage with coarse leaves. For more horticulture tips, go the Backyard Farmer website at: <http://byf.unl.edu>.

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