

WATERMELON PETIOLE SAMPLING INSTRUCTIONS

Plant samples need to be VERY SPECIFIC because nutrient content of petioles and leaves vary with LOCATION of the leaf on the stalk. The AGE of the leaf also makes a big difference.

Petioles (P) hold nutrients in the sap that will be seen as the plant grows in 7 to 21 days.

Leaves (L) hold nutrients that have been utilized by the plant to date.

Always inform the lab of the exact leaves sampled (young leaves test different than old) so that the proper standards are used for a better guide for fertilization. Take one leaf per plant of the exact same age and location on the plants for each of the composite samples.

SIZE OF SAMPLE: Take 30 to 50 individual petioles (stems); numbers depend on size of leaf or stem. A larger sample results in too much volume in the lab and can result in sample segregation. A too small sample can result in poor test aliquots. BE SURE THERE IS ADEQUATE SAMPLE (95% moisture) after it is dried.

WHICH LEAVES: Take the most recent fully developed leaf. Lift the main runner and count from the most recent unfurled leaf back to about the 6th leaf. DO NOT GO too far back towards the older leaves (dark) or up towards the younger leaves (light color).

PETIOLE: For petiole sampling, discard the leaf and send the whole stem.

LEAF: For leaf sampling, take 10 to 15 most recent fully expanded leaves per sample.



PLANT SAMPLE HANDLING: WASH samples thoroughly before they wilt, to remove any contaminants (dust-sand-spray residue-sweat). Rinse with drinking water and pat dry with a paper towel before placing in paper sacks for shipment to the lab. The final rinse should be done with distilled water, if possible. Handle with clean hands and place only on clean surfaces or in paper bags. A simple rinse is better than nothing!

Use a paper bag so leaves/petioles can dry. The first thing the lab must do is dry the leaves. The process of drying can be started as soon as leaves are washed by placing bags on dash of vehicle. Do not enclose fresh samples in an airtight plastic bag to avoid molding in transit to the lab. Molding can affect the analysis results.

IDENTIFICATION OF SAMPLE: Be sure to clearly mark the bags with sample identifications. Provide as much information as possible on submittal forms, such as date sampled, emergence date, variety, field location, size/age of plant, size of fruit, growth condition, soil moisture level, insect or disease damage, production and fertilizer history, a copy of any previous soil tests, and any other observations that could influence growth. Include all information with the samples in the shipment to the lab.

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