

building. Waste lime or cement, frequently discarded, serves to make the soil too alkaline for suitable growth of certain plants.

Plants needing a near-neutral soil will grow well with moderate applications of limestone. Such soils, however, frequently tend to revert rather rapidly toward a more acid condition than when freshly limed.

Far reaching changes often take place when very acid soils are limed. Results are more pronounced when hydrated lime is used than when ground limestone is the material added. High acidity (low pH) brings into the soil water relatively high concentrations of iron and aluminum. Soluble aluminum compounds are frequently toxic to plants. Limestone applications tend to lower the content of soluble aluminum.

Solubility of phosphates tends to be highest near neutrality and therefore most usable for plants. When lime is added there is a danger that certain of the minor elements may be changed to a form plants can not use. Some of these necessary minerals are copper, zinc and manganese. The danger may appear when the pH of the soil is near neutrality but increases as alkalinity becomes pronounced. As a rule ground limestone for soil application would contain from 5 to 10 percent of magnesium carbonate.

A gardener takes pride in the excellence of the plants he grows. He does best when he has a proper relationship between soil acidity and the requirements of his particular plants. This is a short story of soil acidity, the selection of suitable plants for the soil available and the making of soil pH adjustments when it is desirable to do so.

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### PALM TREE BEFORE THE MIST

*So many days I've looked across the canyon  
Upon a haze-blue slope where blurry trees  
Melt softly into bush-rounds in a tapestry  
Of hidden individualities.*

*One stormy day a mist hung on the valley  
Gold-glited from the west where skies were calm.  
And at the canyon, dark out of the mist  
Appeared in sudden silhouette, a palm  
Of perfect symmetry. I'd never seen  
This tree before, commanding as a queen.*

*I've looked since for the palm. Yes, it is there,  
But gray and insignificant once more.  
Why should rare circumstance, alone, reveal  
So many treasures at our very door?*

Lydia Bowen



Bowen, Lydia. 1969. "Palm tree before the mist." *Lasca leaves* 19, 54.

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