

Diggin' In

CRYSTAL GREEN | By Tyrell Marchant
Images courtesy Ostara Nutrient Recovery Technologies

Green Thumb

Crystal Green provides season-long phosphorus supply

Every agricultural chemical that hits the market (and many that ultimately don't) promises big things. Bigger savings, bigger crop uniformity, bigger yields and, most importantly, bigger profits. To be fair, most of them deliver on those promises—when applied in the correct context.



The folks at Ostara are trying to make sure growers do just that with the company's continuous-release phosphate fertilizer Crystal Green. "It's definitely not a replacement for common water-soluble phosphorus," says Molly Biedenfield, Ostara vice president of nutrients over market development and sales. "But it can certainly make a positive difference for growers."

The key difference between Crystal Green and other phosphate fertilizers is its mode of action: Crystal Green is citrate-soluble, meaning it will only release nutrients in the presence of a growing root zone. When applied at planting, it will release phosphorus throughout the season as potato plants require it.

"With that release mechanism, it doesn't get tied up in soils of extremely high or extremely low pH," says Biedenfield. "It's been most successful in areas with extreme pH levels, because that's where you usually see the phosphorus tied up. Where a normal water-soluble source will get tied up, Crystal Green has the release mechanism and ties up less."

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A photograph of the IRROMesh soil moisture management device. The device is a green, triangular-shaped sensor with a white antenna on top. It is shown next to a pair of green and white polka-dot gloves. The background is a pile of colorful potatoes. The text 'IRROMesh' is written in large, green, stylized letters at the top. Below it, the word 'Wireless' is written in a yellow, cursive font. At the bottom, the text 'SOIL MOISTURE MANAGEMENT' is written in large, green, bold letters, and the website 'www.IRRMETER.com' is written in white.

The continuous-release mode of action provides another benefit: Biedenfield says trials of Crystal Green have shown a significant reduction in phosphorus leaching and runoff when compared to water-soluble phosphorus sources. "From an environmental standpoint, it's significantly better," she says. "It makes an especially big difference in areas with sensitive watersheds."

Of course, the question must be asked, How does this stuff affect yields? "The intended effect is to increase marketable yields," says Biedenfield. "In two years

of grower trials, we've seen, on average, a 10 to 13 percent increase, particularly shining in areas of extreme soil pH."

Of course, the Crystal Green team isn't out to sell its product just for the sake of making a sale. "There are better ways for growers to feed their potato crops," says Biedenfield. "We want to provide the maximum benefit to the grower, and we're trying to find the areas where this product makes the most sense for them."



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