

While many farm costs have been rising steadily, fertilizer has remained one of the best buys. USDA cost studies show land and labor costs have increased 40% to 50% during the past ten years while fertilizer is very little higher in price. Besides, numerous studies have shown that each dollar spent on fertilizer is often worth \$3 in terms of crop production.

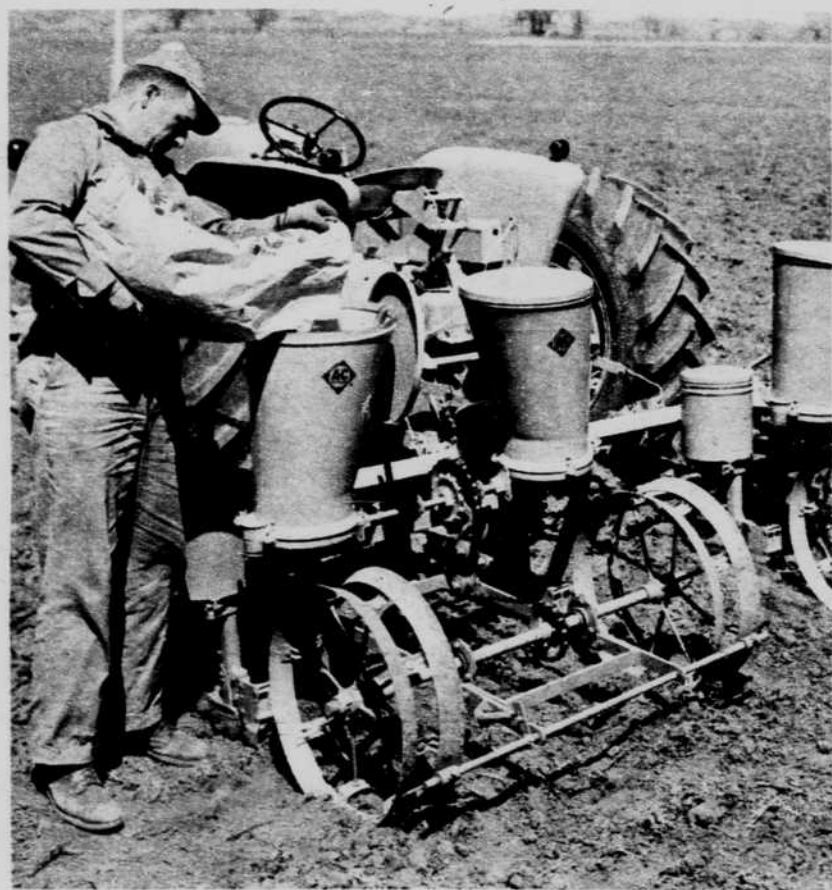
Exceptionally high corn yields of 150 to 200 bushels per acre may not be practical for your particular farm but undoubtedly you can improve yields through better fertilization and crop management. This should be done with the aid of soil test results.

The National Plant Food Institute, in cooperation with state colleges, has compiled charts which show average yields of various crops for each major soil type in the state. They have also determined potential yields for each of these areas. In many cases the potential is nearly double the yields currently being realized. Check with your county extension agent or the college for copies of these charts.

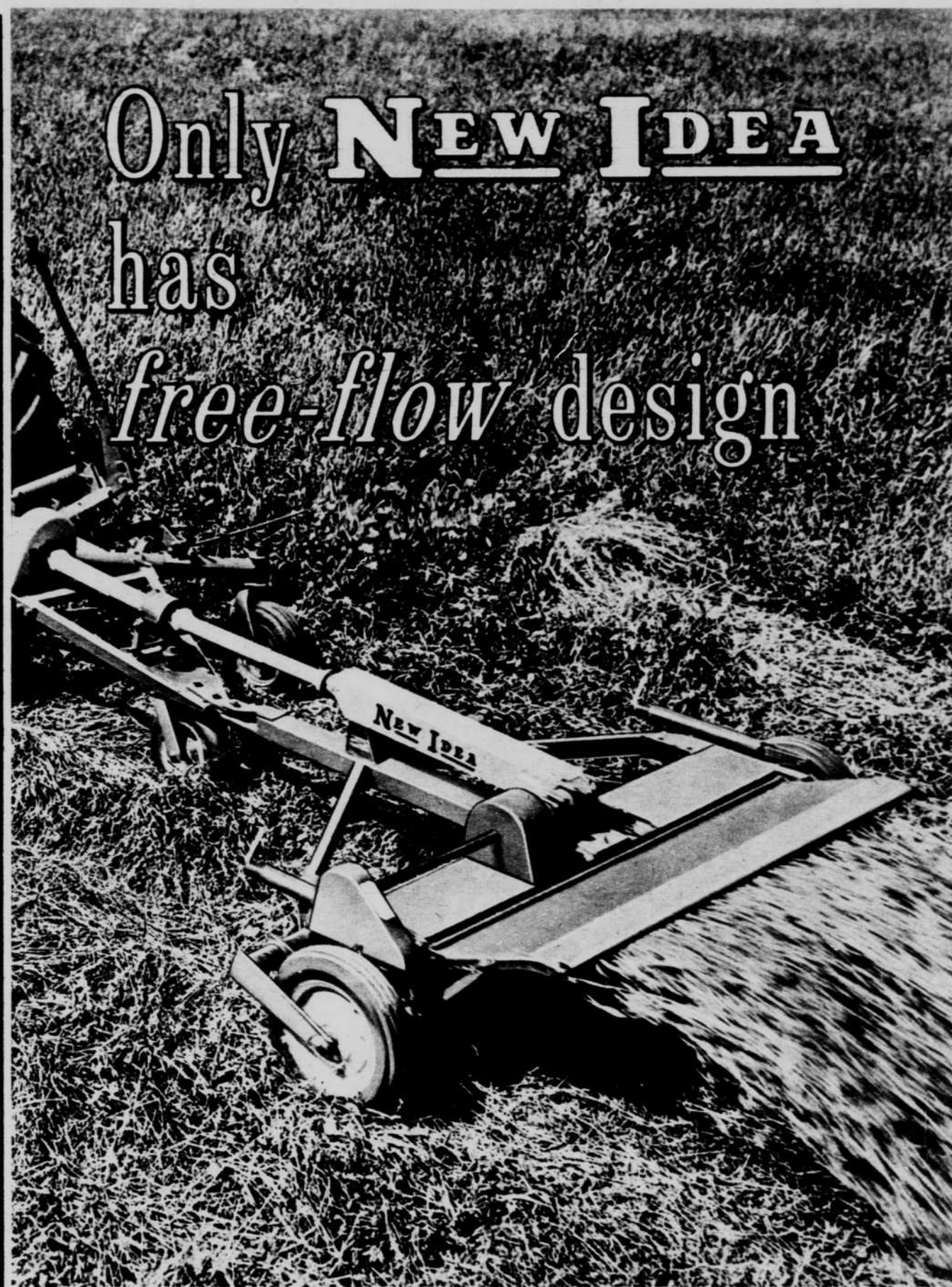
Plow-down applications are probably the best way of putting on large amounts of needed fertilizer. Potash and phosphate can both be spread and then plowed under. Part of the nitrogen needed for the growing crop can be applied as you plow. Many farmers are using anhydrous ammonia, combining application and plowing in one operation. They mount the ammonia tank on the plow or tractor drawbar with hoses running into each furrow. This gives even distribution in the soil and researchers say losses are often less than 1%. The hoses or tubes should be long enough so that about three feet of length extends under the turned-over plow slice. Complete application kits are available from several manufacturers.

Higher starter fertilizer applications can be safely used if you have a planter with an offset fertilizer boot rather than the old split-boot type. Phosphate and potash are most important in starter fertilizer if you have plowed down some nitrogen or plan to make a sidedress application later. Normally starter phosphate should be at least 50% water soluble to get the plants off to a fast start.

Nitrogen needs of the corn plant are highest during mid-summer. Applied during the latter part of June, you'll get much more complete use and lend the most help to potential yields. Remember for each 100 bushels of corn per acre the plants need about 150 pounds of nitrogen, 70 to 75 pounds of potash and about 25 pounds of phosphate. Make sure your fertilizer applications are high enough to make this amount available to the plants during the growing season.



Most soils respond favorably to fertilizer applied at planting. But fit the rate and analysis to your soils. The best way of knowing what your particular needs are is through a soil test. Since starter fertilizers are high in phosphate and potash the needs of most soils can be met by them. Without sufficient phosphorous and potassium in the soil, plants are not able to make full use of nitrogen.



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