

CALITIES

MAKE YOUR OWN PH TESTING KIT

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One of the tools landholders will need to determine the acidity of water in ponds, drains and dams is some sort of pH measurement technique.

The simplest and cheapest way of doing this is to make pH test strips with red cabbage juice (although people scoff because it sounds silly, and think that "real" science measurements can only be made with an expensive gizmo bought from an analytical supplier). There is real science behind this. Red cabbage contains a group of natural dyes called anthocyanins that are very pH sensitive (particularly under acid conditions) and change colour accordingly.

The colour changes that take place between pH 2 and 6 are shown on a colour chart [*not given here – if you want a copy, email me and I will send you one. Ed.*]

The test strips are made in the following way:

1. Grate or blend about 1/2 a red cabbage into a glass or ceramic bowl (it stains plastic - so OK to use an ice-cream container).

2. Pour in enough methylated spirits into the bowl to cover the red cabbage and leave (in a well ventilated place - best outdoors) to steep until the meths is strongly coloured (a purplish colour).

3. Get a large pack of cotton buds (packs of 750 to 1000 can be picked up for \$2 in \$2 shops) and dip one end in the coloured meths.

4. Line a number of oven trays with absorbent kitchen paper towels and spread the dipped cotton buds out in a layer on the tray. Leave to dry in the sun for a couple of hours.

5. Pack in plastic bags with a copy of the colour chart.

To use, simply dip in the water to be tested and compare to the chart. Easy!