used for centuries in Europe and knowledge of its benefits were carried over to the U.S from previous experience and also from writings of Europeans on the principles of plant growth and nutrition. This knowledge was rarely put to use, however, since it was easier for the farmers to move to more fertile grounds than to haul lime the long distances usually required.

Extensive investigations on crop responses to lime appeared to originate in the Northeastern region of the U.S.. Near the end of the 19th century Wheeler and co-workers related the need for lime on acid upland soils in Rhode Island. Prior to this time the practice of liming had become well established in certain localities based primarily on farmer experience. It was not until the early 20th century that extensive liming trials were begun in the Southern and Midwestern U.S..

Litmus Test

Although litmus was first used as an indicator of acidity in 1865, it had no general application for recommending lime until many years later. Wheeler and Tucker (1896), reported that soils testing more acid on litmus paper benefited more from liming than did soils testing neutral or nearly neutral. They called for a chemical test that, by determining the relative acidity of a soil, would be able to prescribe the correct quantity of lime needed.