



# Floral Hemp Fertility and Plant Nutrition

## Nitrogen and Potassium Rate Study and Foliar Nutrient Survey

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UVM Industrial Hemp Conference  
February 20, 2020



# Agronomic Services Division Laboratory Sections

- Soil Testing
- Nematode Assay
- Plant, Waste, Solution, & Media Analysis

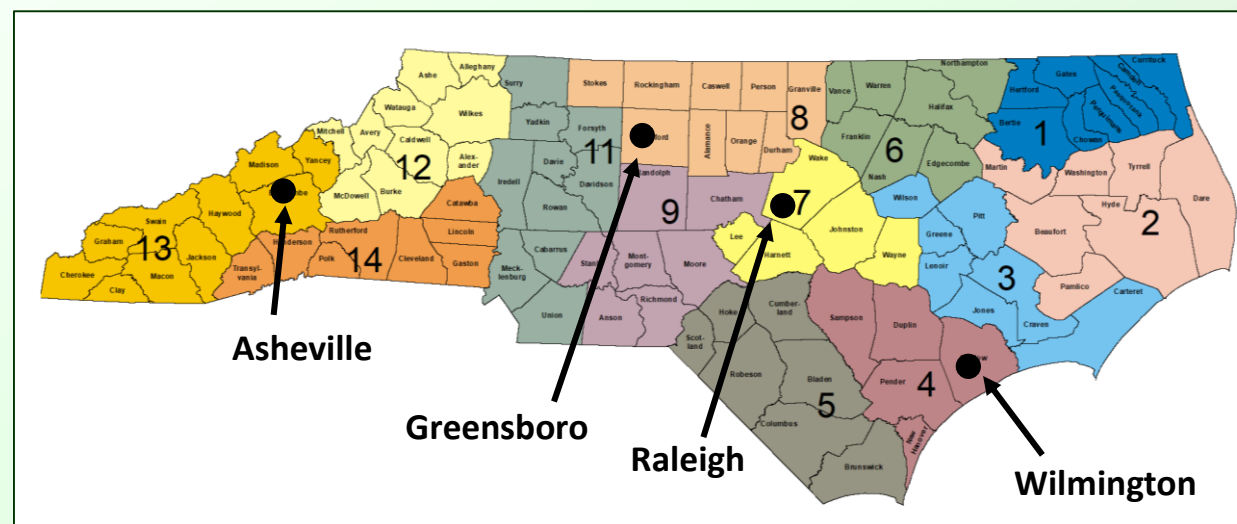


# Agronomic Services Division Field Services Section

- Provide on-farm consultations
- Diagnose plant growth problems
- Advise to prevent or correct plant growth problems



Dr. Michelle McGinnis and 13 Regional Agronomists





# Purpose of this presentation

Tell you about the work we're doing to

- Obtain scientifically valid information
- To be incorporated into our lab's interpretations and recommendations
- And provide economically and environmentally, and scientifically sound nutrient advice.

NCDA Agronomic Services, NCSU Crop & Soil Science, NCSU Horticultural Science





# Soil Test Recommendations for Hemp

Based on University of Kentucky guidelines for seed and fiber hemp

## Target pH

- 6.2 for mineral soil
- 5.5 for mineral-organic soil
- 5.0 for organic soil

## Nitrogen rate

- 50 lb/A for fiber
- 100-150 lb/A for seed/grain
- No recommendation for flower\*  
(100-150 lb/A typical grower rate)

## Phosphorus and potassium rates (based on soil test results)

- Phosphorus ( $P_2O_5$ )
  - 0 lb/A at P-Index of 70
  - 150 lb/A at P-Index of 0
- Potassium ( $K_2O$ )
  - 0 lb/A at K-Index of 80
  - 150 lb/A at K-Index of 0

\*NCDA/NCSU research underway to determine optimal N and K rates for floral hemp

# Plant Tissue Analysis

Tool to manage in-season fertility and  
help identify cause(s) of plant growth problems





# Representative leaf tissue samples



- Collect the most recently mature leaf (MRML)
- Generally the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> leaf down from the growing point
- Collect 1-2 MRMLs from 20-30 from similar environments (30-40 leaves per sample)
- Send to lab; lab measures essential plant nutrients

**GARBAGE INTO THE LAB – GARBAGE OUT OF THE LAB**



# Compare lab results to crop specific nutrient ranges

- **Sufficiency Ranges**

- Established through yield based studies a wide range of growing environments
- Not established for hemp

- **Survey Ranges**

- Based on observational data rather than research
- Published guidelines (Bryson & Mills)\*
- Good framework of nutrient status

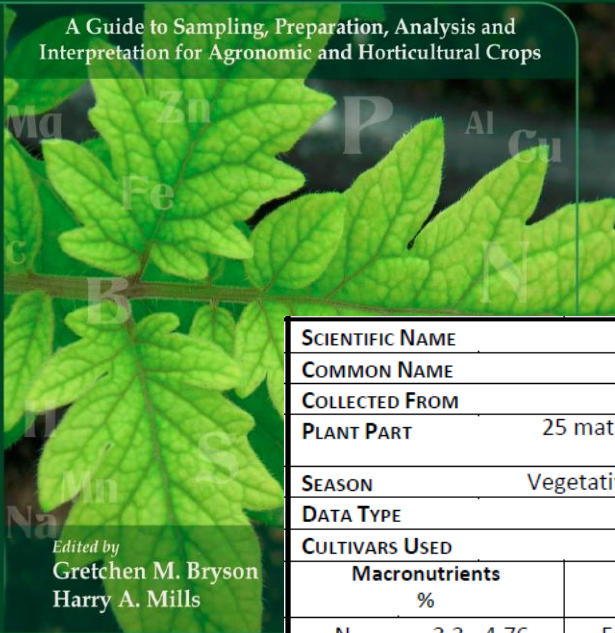
- **Lab reports**

- Indicate if nutrients are sufficient, low, or high

\*Bryson, G.M, and H.A. Mills (Eds). 2014. *Plant analysis handbook IV e-edition. A guide to sampling, preparation, analysis, and interpretation for agronomic and horticultural crops.* Athens, GA: Macro-Micro Publishing Inc.

# Plant Analysis Handbook IV

## A Guide to Sampling, Preparation, Analysis and Interpretation for Agronomic and Horticultural Crops



Edited by  
Gretchen M. Bryson  
Harry A. Mills

SCIENTIFIC NAME		<i>Cannabis sativa</i>	
COMMON NAME		<b>Cannabis</b>	
COLLECTED FROM		Production nursery	
PLANT PART		25 mature leaves from new growth	
SEASON		Vegetative prior to flowering	
DATA TYPE		Survey Range	
CULTIVARS USED			
Macronutrients %		Micronutrients ppm	
N	3.3 - 4.76	Fe	100 - 150
P	0.24 - 0.49	Mn	41 - 93
K	1.83 - 2.35	B	56 - 105
Ca	1.47 - 4.42	Cu	5 - 7.1
Mg	0.4 - 0.81	Zn	24 - 52
S	0.17 - 0.26	Mo	0.5 - 1.5



# Sufficiency Ranges for Plant Analysis



## REFERENCE SUFFICIENCY RANGES FOR PLANT ANALYSIS IN THE SOUTHERN REGION OF THE UNITED STATES

Southern Cooperative Series Bulletin #394

July 2000

*Updated and reformatted July 2009  
Updated September 2011  
Updated January 2013*

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## Reference Sufficiency Ranges for Plant Analysis in the Southern Region of the United States

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# Sufficiency Range Reference for Cotton

## Reference Sufficiency Ranges — Field Crops



Cotton

C. C. Mitchell and W. H. Baker

### Sufficiency Levels and Critical Values

Sufficiency ranges for cotton have often been used based upon observations and ranges of analyses of plant tissue from healthy or normal cotton crops. For this reason, ranges may be broad and too inclusive. Therefore, use of a sufficiency range for cotton and the implied critical concentration (lower end of sufficiency range) of a nutrient for deficiencies or toxicities are not absolute.

### Sampling Procedures

#### Petiole analysis

Sample petioles from the most recently matured leaf on the vegetative stem at intervals beginning the week before first bloom and continuing for 7 or 8 weeks after bloom. Samples should be taken at weekly intervals and compared for the results to be meaningful. Interpret petiole analysis for NO<sub>3</sub>-N, total P, and total K only. Nitrate analysis is the most meaningful and the primary reason for sampling.

#### Leaf blade at early bloom

Sample the uppermost, mature cotton leaf blade on the vegetative stem. Discard the petiole. (Note: some research has included both leaf blade and petiole.) This is usually the 3rd to 5th leaf from the terminal. Sample during the period of one week before to one week after first bloom.

### Sufficiency Ranges

#### Petioles

The petioles from the most recently matured leaf on the vegetative stem at intervals beginning "Arkansas Interpretation" may be more appropriate for loess and other fine-textured soils of the mid-South whereas the "Georgia Interpretation" was developed for the coarser textured soils of the Atlantic and Gulf Coastal Plain.

#### Problem-solving Samples

These samples can be taken at any time during the growing season. Comparative samples from "good" and "bad" areas should be taken according to guidelines at the stage of growth.

#### Monitoring Samples

These samples should be taken at full tillering (Zadoks 30; Feekes 5) to predict nutritional status and additional nitrogen required to optimize yield. Final monitoring samples should be taken at flag leaf emergence (Zadoks 45; Feekes 10) to evaluate nutrient program.

#### Sufficiency Ranges

##### Important Ratios

The N:S ratio should be between 10 and 15 for optimum yields. N:S ratios greater than or equal to 18 indicate that sulfur is limiting in relation to nitrogen.

#### Seeding to Tillering, Jointing to Flag Leaf Emergence

Macronutrients					
N	P	K	Ca	Mg	S
4.0-5.0%	0.3-0.5%	2.5-5.0%	0.2-1.0%	0.14-1.0%	0.15-0.65%

Micronutrients					
Fe	Mn	Zn	Cu	B	Mo
30-200 ppm	20-150 ppm	18-70 ppm	4.5-15 ppm	1.5-4 ppm	0.1-3.0 ppm

#### Flag Leaf Maturity

Macronutrients					
N	P	K	Ca	Mg	S
4.0-5.0%	0.3-0.5%	2.0-4.0%	0.2-1.0%	0.14-1.0%	0.15-0.65%

Micronutrients					
Fe	Mn	Zn	Cu	B	Mo
30-200 ppm	20-150 ppm	18-70 ppm	4.5-15 ppm	1.5-4.0 ppm	0.1-3.0 ppm

#### "Arkansas" Interpretation (Benton and others 1979)

Time of sampling	Nitrate nitrogen (ppm)	Phosphorus (ppm)
Week of bloom	10,000-35,000	>800
Bloom + 1 week	9,000-30,000	*
Bloom + 2 weeks	7,000-25,000	*
Bloom + 3 weeks	5,000-20,000	*
Bloom + 4 weeks	3,000-13,000	*
Bloom + 5 weeks	2,000-8,000	*
Bloom + 6 weeks	1,000-5,000	*
Bloom + 7 weeks	0-5,000	*
Bloom + 8 weeks	0-5,000	*

\* A decrease in P concentration of more than 300 ppm from the previous week usually indicates moisture stress

#### "Georgia" Interpretation (Lutrick and others 1986; Plank, personal communication)

Time of sampling	Nitrate nitrogen (ppm)	Phosphorus (ppm)
Week before first bloom	7,000-13,000	>800
Week of bloom	4,500-12,500	>800
Bloom + 1 week	3,500-11,000	*
Bloom + 2 weeks	2,500-8,500	*
Bloom + 3 weeks	1,500-7,500	*
Bloom + 4 weeks	1,000-7,000	*
Bloom + 5 weeks	1,000-6,000	*
Bloom + 6 weeks	500-4,000	*
Bloom + 7 weeks	500-4,000	*
Bloom + 8 weeks	500-4,000	*

\* A decrease in P concentration of more than 300 ppm from the previous week usually indicates moisture stress

#### "California" Petiole K Interpretation (Bassett and MacKenzie 1976)

Time of sampling	% Potassium (K)
Week of first bloom	4.0-5.5
Bloom + 4 weeks	3.0-4.0

## Reference Sufficiency Ranges — Field Crops

#### Youngest, Mature Leaf Blade

The following sufficiency ranges were compiled from several sources (Anderson and others 1971; Hodges and Hadden 1992; Mullins and Burnester 1990, 1992, 1993; Plank 1988; Reeves and Mullins 1993; Sabbe and Mackenzie 1973; Sabbe and others 1972).

	Macronutrients (%)				
	N	P	K	Ca	Mg
early bloom	3.0-4.5	0.3-0.65	1.5-3.0	0.3-0.9	0.35-0.8
late bloom / maturity	3.0-4.5	0.15-0.6	0.75-2.5	0.2-0.4	0.3-0.9

	Micronutrients (ppm)				
	Fe	Mn	Zn	Cu	B
early bloom	50-250	25-350	20-300	5-25	20-80
late bloom / maturity	50-300	10-400	50-300		15-200

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# Sufficiency Range Reference for Small Grains

## Reference Sufficiency Ranges — Field Crops



### Small Grain —Barley, Oats, Rye, Wheat

C. O. Plank and S. J. Donohue

#### • Critical Values

The values given here are best estimates based on extensive experience. They apply to all samples and growth stages.

Macronutrients					
N	P	K	Ca	Mg	S
3.0%	0.15%	2.0%	0.15%	0.10%	0.10%

Micronutrients					
Fe	Mn	Zn	Cu	B	Mo
25 ppm	15 ppm	15 ppm	3 ppm	1 ppm	0.05 ppm

#### • Sampling Procedures

##### *Seedling to Tillering*

Whole plants should be collected by cutting 1 inch above the soil surface. Samples can be taken by grasping existing growth at a given site and cutting at the recommended level above the soil with a small knife. Dead leaves should be avoided as much as possible. After collecting subsamples from several locations in a field, clippings should be combined for a representative sample.

##### *Jointing to Flag Leaf Emergence*

Break the top two to three leaves (growing point) from representative plants in several locations of the field. Combine for a representative sample. Stems should be included.

##### *Flag Leaf to Maturity*

Flag leaves from representative plants in the field should be collected randomly. A minimum of 15 to 20 leaves should be collected from a given field or area.

## Reference Sufficiency Ranges — Field Crops

#### • Remarks

Sufficiency ranges are based on available literature and experience interpreting plant samples.

Results are less reliable as crop approaches maturity. Comparative "good" and "bad" samples should be used when sampling at various stages of maturity.

Sufficiency ranges can generally be applied for wheat, oats, rye, and barley although most of the research has been done on wheat.

#### • References

Mills HA, Jones JB Jr. 1996. Plant analysis handbook II: a practical sampling, preparation, analysis, and interpretation guide. Athens (GA): Micro-Macro Publishing.

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49.8%



# NCDA Plant Analysis Report

## Crop with established sufficiency ranges

Sample Information		Nutrient Measurements are given in units of parts per million (ppm or mg/L) unless otherwise specified.												
ID: WHEAT		N (%)	P (%)	K (%)	Ca (%)	Mg (%)	S (%)	Fe	Mn	Zn	Cu	B	Mo	NO3-N
Crop: Wheat		5.57	0.48	3.07	0.17	0.04	0.55	93.7	83.6	26.0	5.81	2.96	-	-
Growth Stage: E		Interpretation Indexes												
Week: 16		N	P	K	Ca	Mg	S	Fe	Mn	Zn	Cu	B	Mo	
		89-H	73-S	56-S	38-L	12-D	69-S	59-S	62-S	54-S	53-S	51-S	-	
Plant Part: W		Other Results					Nutrient Ratios							
Plant Position: U		Na (%)	Cl (%)	C (%)	DW (g)	Al	N:S	N:K	Fe:Mn					
Plant Appearance:		0.01	-	-	-	86.9	10.1 : 1	1.81 : 1	1.12 : 1					

Plant indexes based on crop specific sufficiency ranges

- 50-75 – Nutrients within sufficiency range
- <50 – Nutrients low or deficient
- >75 – Nutrients high

## Crop w/o established sufficiency ranges

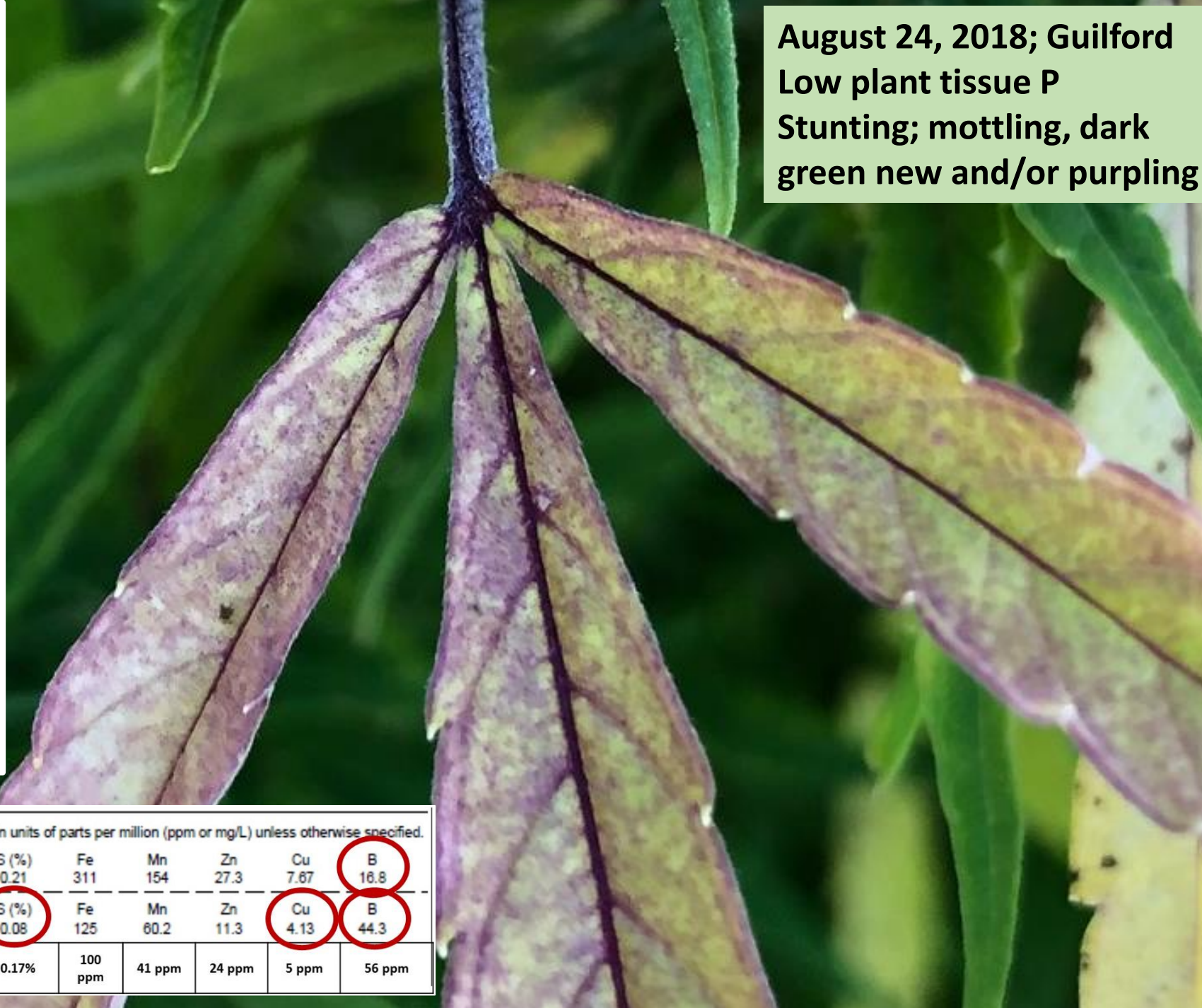
Sample Information		Nutrient Measurements are given in units of parts per million (ppm or mg/L) unless otherwise specified.												
ID: BAT		N (%)	P (%)	K (%)	Ca (%)	Mg (%)	S (%)	Fe	Mn	Zn	Cu	B	Mo	NO <sub>3</sub> -N
Crop: Hemp, Field		5.45	0.29	2.06	1.93	0.29	0.28	118	154	41.1	17.3	53.9	-	-
Growth Stage: M		Interpretation Indexes												
Week: 0		N	P	K	Ca	Mg	S	Fe	Mn	Zn	Cu	B	Mo	
Plant Part: M		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Plant Position: 0		Other Results					Nutrient Ratios							
		Na (%)	Cl (%)	C (%)	DW (g)	Al	N:S	N:K	Fe:Mn					
		0.00	-	-	0.62	22.4	19.4 : 1	2.65 : 1	0.77 : 1					

• No indexes for hemp b/c no sufficiency ranges or NC based survey ranges

• Compare results to Bryson & Mills survey ranges listed in Agronomist's Comments

**Agronomist's Comments:** Plant sufficiency ranges for hemp have not yet been established. The following are survey ranges for Cannabis in production nurseries at the vegetative stage prior to flowering reported in the Plant Analysis Handbook: N (3.3-4.76%); P (0.24-0.49%); K (1.83-2.35%); Ca (1.47-4.42%); Mg (0.4-0.81%); S (0.17-0.26%); Fe (100-150 ppm); Mn (41-93 ppm); B (56-105 ppm); Cu (5-7.1 ppm); Zn (24-52 ppm); Mo (0.5-.1.5 ppm). Kristin A. Hicks 7/30/2019 9:29 AM





August 24, 2018; Guilford  
Low plant tissue P  
Stunting; mottling, dark  
green new and/or purpling

Sample Information		Nutrient Measurements are given in units of parts per million (ppm or mg/L) unless otherwise specified.									
GH1	N (%)	P (%)	K (%)	Ca (%)	Mg (%)	S (%)	Fe	Mn	Zn	Cu	B
	3.97	0.42	1.87	1.90	0.34	0.21	311	154	27.3	7.67	16.8
FS1	N (%)	P (%)	K (%)	Ca (%)	Mg (%)	S (%)	Fe	Mn	Zn	Cu	B
	1.22	0.19	1.01	1.52	0.19	0.08	125	60.2	11.3	4.13	44.3
Lower end of target range		3.3%	0.24%	1.8%	1.5%	0.40%	100 ppm	41 ppm	24 ppm	5 ppm	56 ppm





September 29, 2018; Hoke County  
Accidental boron overdose (GH hemp)  
Marginal necrosis on lower leaves



Sample Information		Nutrient Measurements are given in units of parts per million (ppm or mg/L) unless otherwise specified.										
ID: hemp1		N (%)	P (%)	K (%)	Ca (%)	Mg (%)	S (%)	Fe	Mn	Zn	Cu	B
Crop: Hemp, G.H.		5.43	0.49	2.64	1.77	0.30	0.67	140	80.2	50.3	3.75	961
Lower end of target range		3.3%	0.24%	1.8%	1.5%	0.40%	0.17%	100 ppm	41 ppm	24 ppm	5 ppm	56 ppm





August 9, 2018; Guilford  
Iron deficiency  
Interveinal chlorosis of new growth

Sample Information		Nutrient Measurements are given in units of parts per million (ppm or mg/L) unless otherwise specified.										
GOOD		N (%) 3.05	P (%) 0.47	K (%) 1.84	Ca (%) 3.06	Mg (%) 0.42	S (%) 0.21	Fe 50.6	Mn 53.0	Zn 35.3	Cu 7.90	B 61.1
BAD		N (%) 2.53	P (%) 0.35	K (%) 1.83	Ca (%) 2.83	Mg (%) 0.32	S (%) 0.17	Fe 110	Mn 42.8	Zn 31.1	Cu 6.70	B 71.8
Lower end of target range		3.3%	0.24%	1.8%	1.5%	0.40%	0.17%	100 ppm	41 ppm	24 ppm	5 ppm	56 ppm





**July 25, 2018; Guilford**  
**Deficient K confirmed with plant tissue analysis**  
**Chlorosis and mottling of lower leaf margins**





# NCDA and NCSU – Two Projects

- 1) Nitrogen and Potassium Rates for Floral Hemp
- 2) Foliar Nutrient Survey for Floral Hemp



# Nitrogen and Potassium Rates for Floral Hemp Objective

- Evaluate the effect
  - Yield (dry floral weight)
  - Cannabinoid concentrations (CBD, THC, etc)
- Establish
  - Soil test K recommendation
  - Optimal N recommendation
  - N and K foliar sufficiency ranges



# Nitrogen and Potassium Rates for Floral Hemp Experimental Design

## Nitrogen Rate Studies

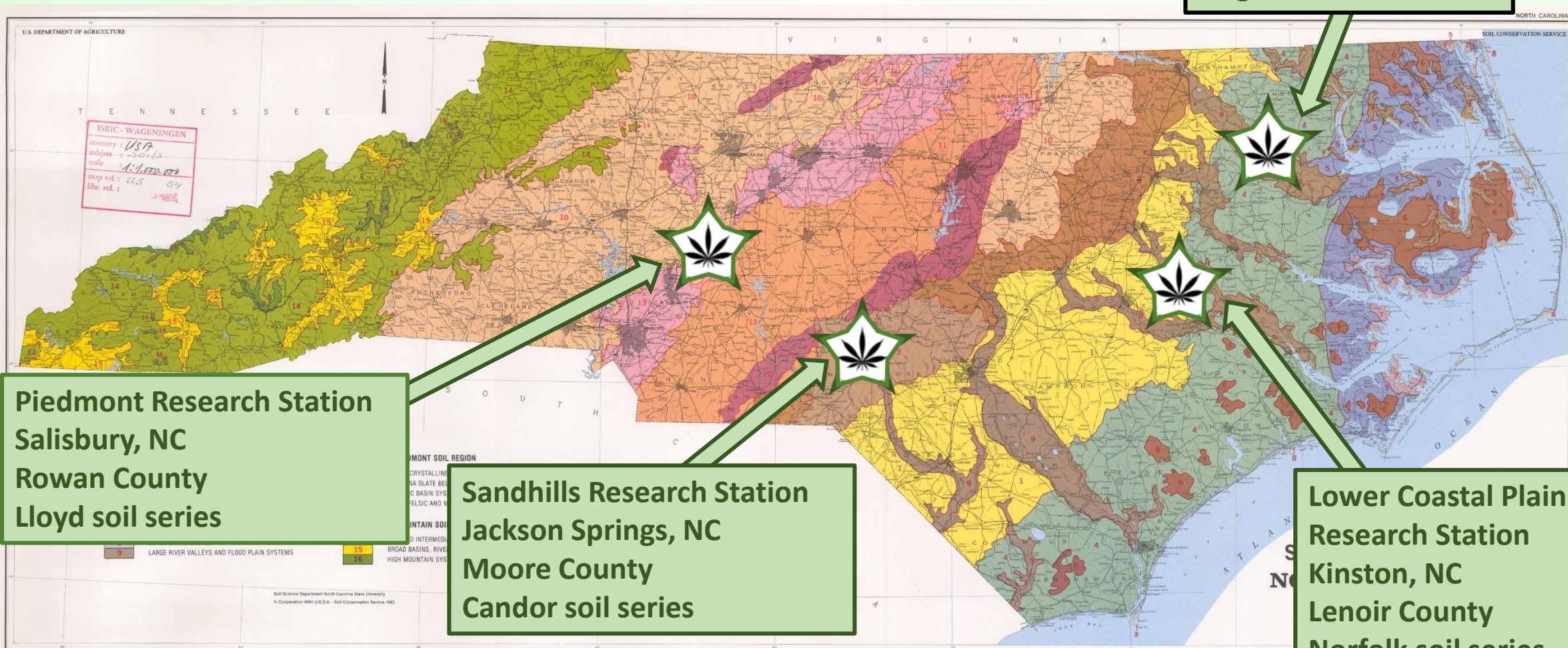
- 0, 50, 100, 150, 200 lb N/A
- RCBD with 4 reps
- Nitrogen: Split-applied with 28% UAN
  - 50% ~10 days after transplanting
  - 50% ~28 days after transplanting

## Potassium Rate Studies

- 0, 50, 100, 150, 200 lb K<sub>2</sub>O/A
- RCBD with 4 reps
- Potassium: Applied with K<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> (0-0-50, 17%S) ~10 days after transplant
- Fields had NCDA soil test K-I <40

# N and K Rates for Floral Hemp Experimental Design – 4 Locations

On-Farm  
Windsor, NC  
Bertie County  
Wickham soil series &  
Dogue soil series





Each plot: 4 rows/plot & 7 plants/row

Potassium (lb/A) – Replication 1

150

100

50

0

200

Nitrogen (lb/A) – Replication 1

150

100


50

0

200

Sandhills Research Station – Jackson Springs, NC



An aerial photograph of a research station in Salisbury, NC. The foreground shows a large field of red soil with numerous small, green soybean plants arranged in a grid pattern. The plants are organized into several distinct rectangular blocks. To the left of the main plot area, a group of people stands under a red umbrella, and a white pickup truck is parked. In the background, there is a large green field, a road, and a house with a blue roof. The sky is overcast.

**Nitrogen (lb/A) – Replication 1**

0

50

100

150

200

**Piedmont Research Station – Salisbury, NC**



# N and K Rates for Floral Hemp Materials & Methods (Planting)

- BaOx clones transplanted
  - Mid-May at research stations
  - Late-June at farm locations
- Mechanical transplanting
- Open beds
- 60" in-row spacing
- Variable between row spacing





# N and K Rates for Floral Hemp Materials & Methods (Data Collection)

- Foliar tissue samples (nutrients)
  - Every other week from Week 4-16
- Growth index measures
  - Every other week from Week 4-16
- Floral tissue samples (cannabinoids)
  - Clear, milk, amber trichome stage (100 lb treatments)
  - Harvest (all treatments)
- Soil samples
  - Pre-plant, Week 8, Harvest



# N and K Rates for Floral Hemp Materials & Methods (Harvesting)

- Three plants per plot
- Tobacco barn at 150°F for 2-3 days (in bags)
- Floral tissue removed from stems
- Placed in dryer until constant weight
- Weighed dry floral material (yield)





# Nitrogen Test at Harvest (Sandhills)



0 lbs N/acre



100 lbs N/acre

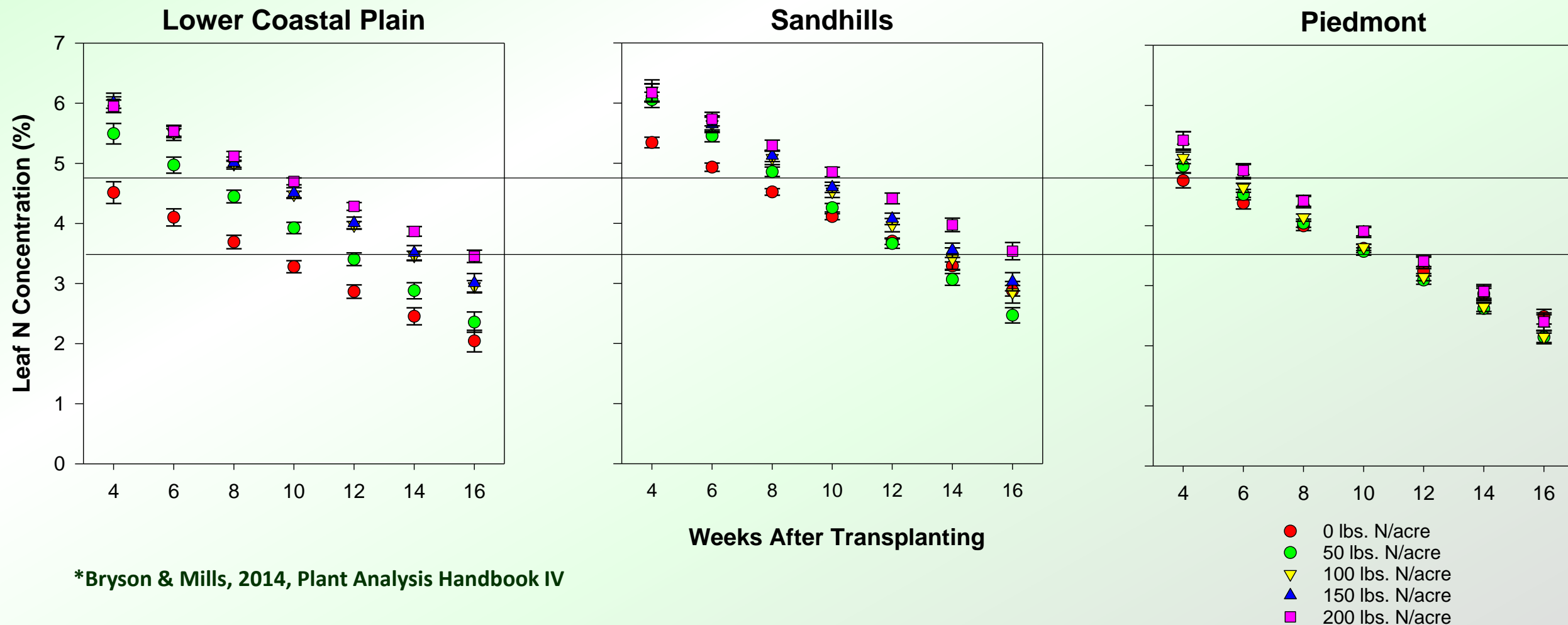


200 lbs N/acre



# Foliar N Concentration (N Rate Study)

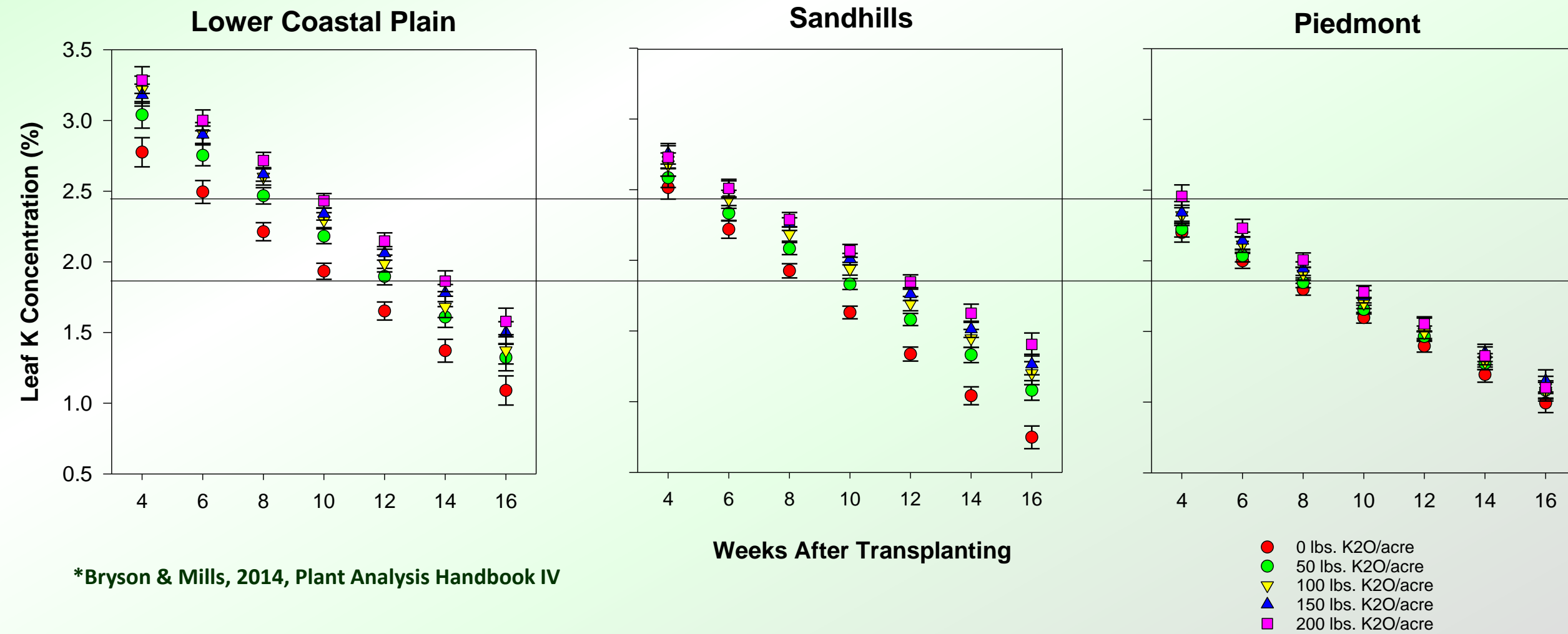
Nitrogen survey range 3.3-4.8%\*



\*Bryson & Mills, 2014, Plant Analysis Handbook IV

# Foliar K Concentration (K Rate Study)

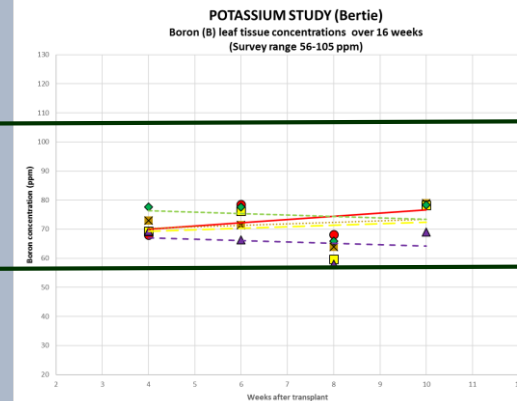
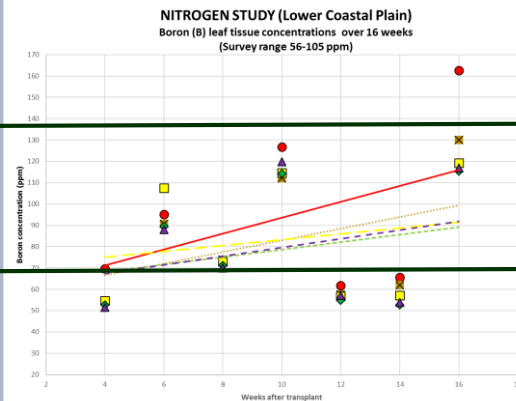
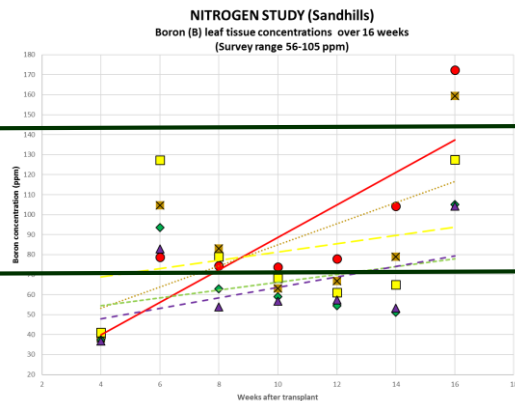
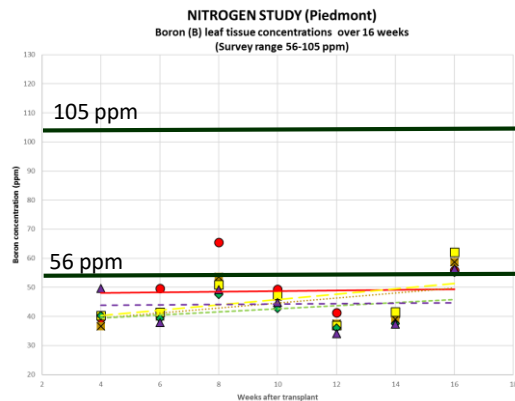
Potassium survey range 1.8-2.4%



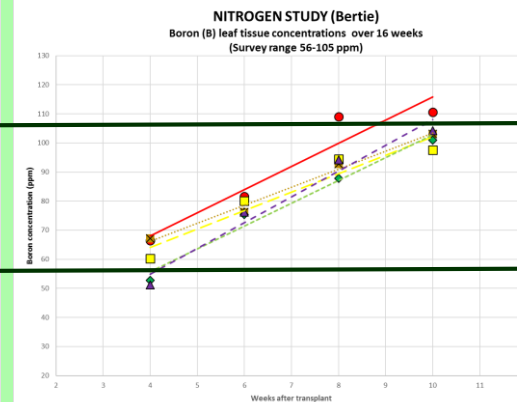
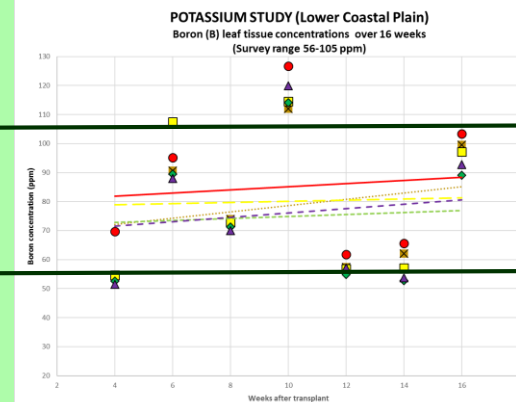
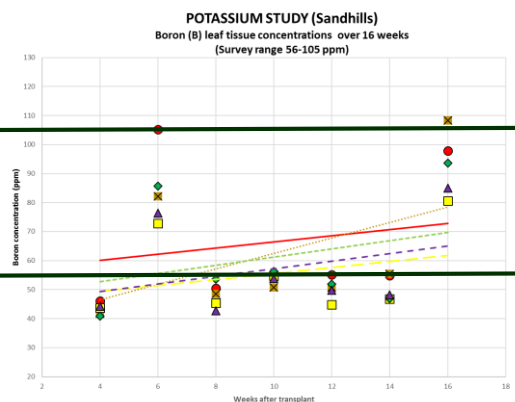
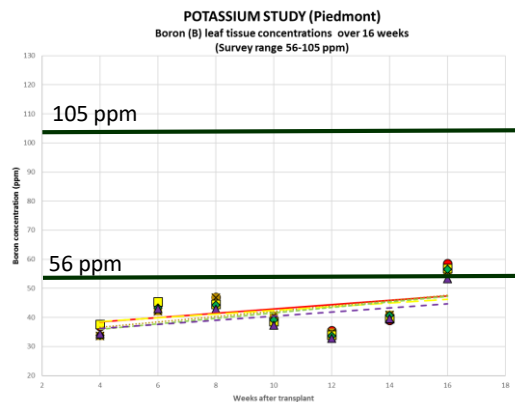


# Foliar boron concentrations

## Nitrogen rate studies

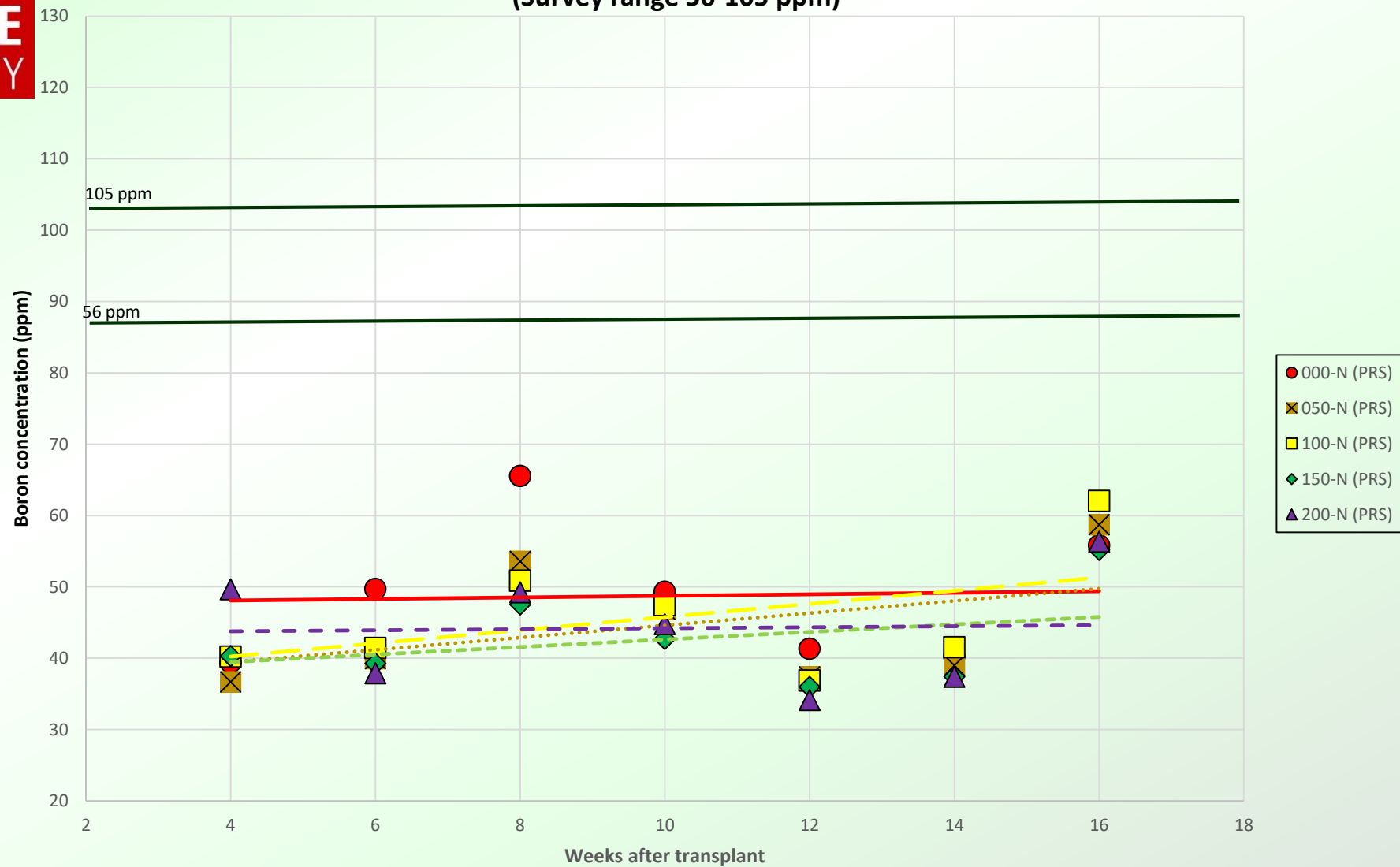


## Potassium rate studies



# NITROGEN STUDY (Piedmont)

Boron (B) leaf tissue concentrations over 16 weeks  
 (Survey range 56-105 ppm)

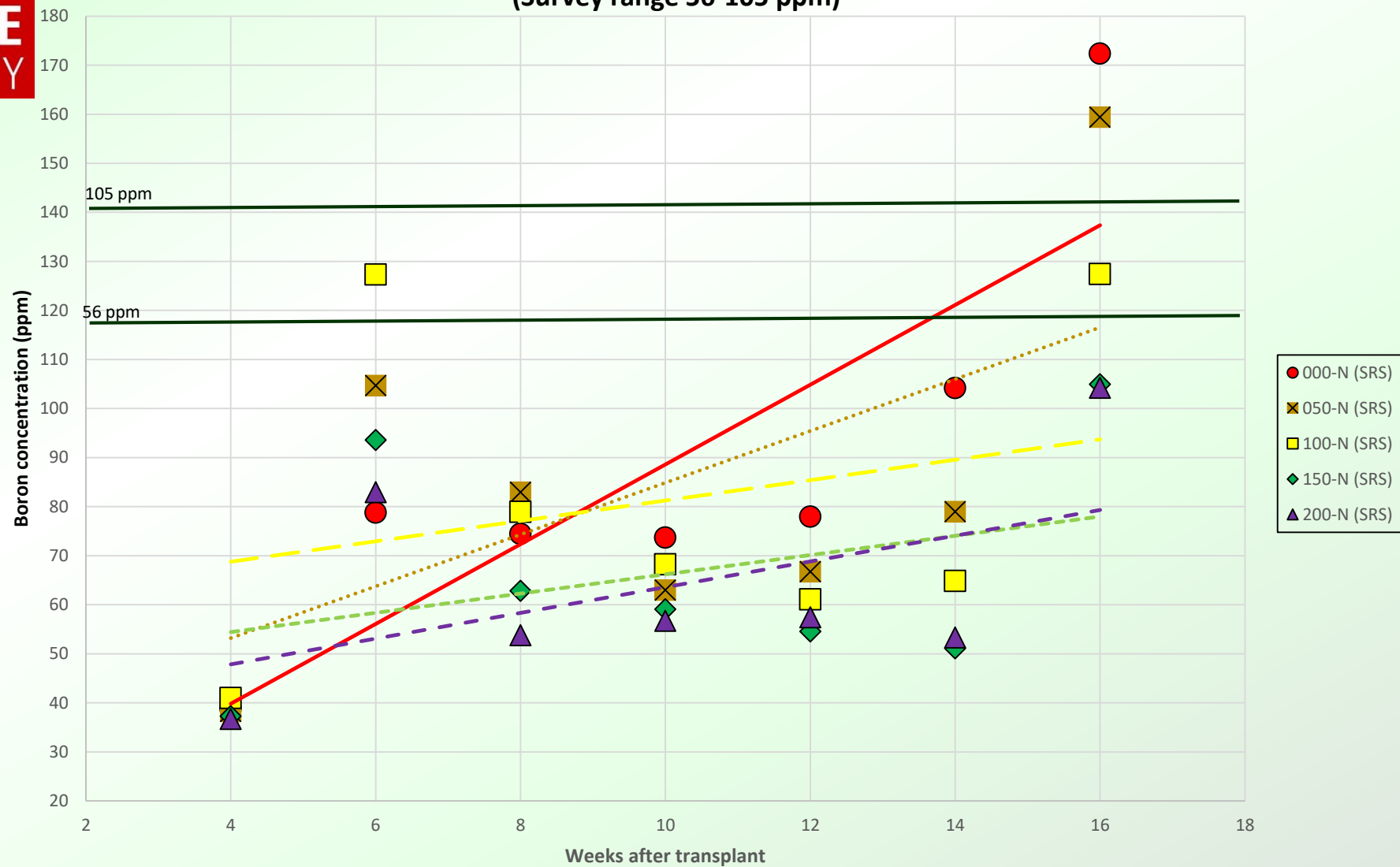




# NITROGEN STUDY (Sandhills)

## Boron (B) leaf tissue concentrations over 16 weeks

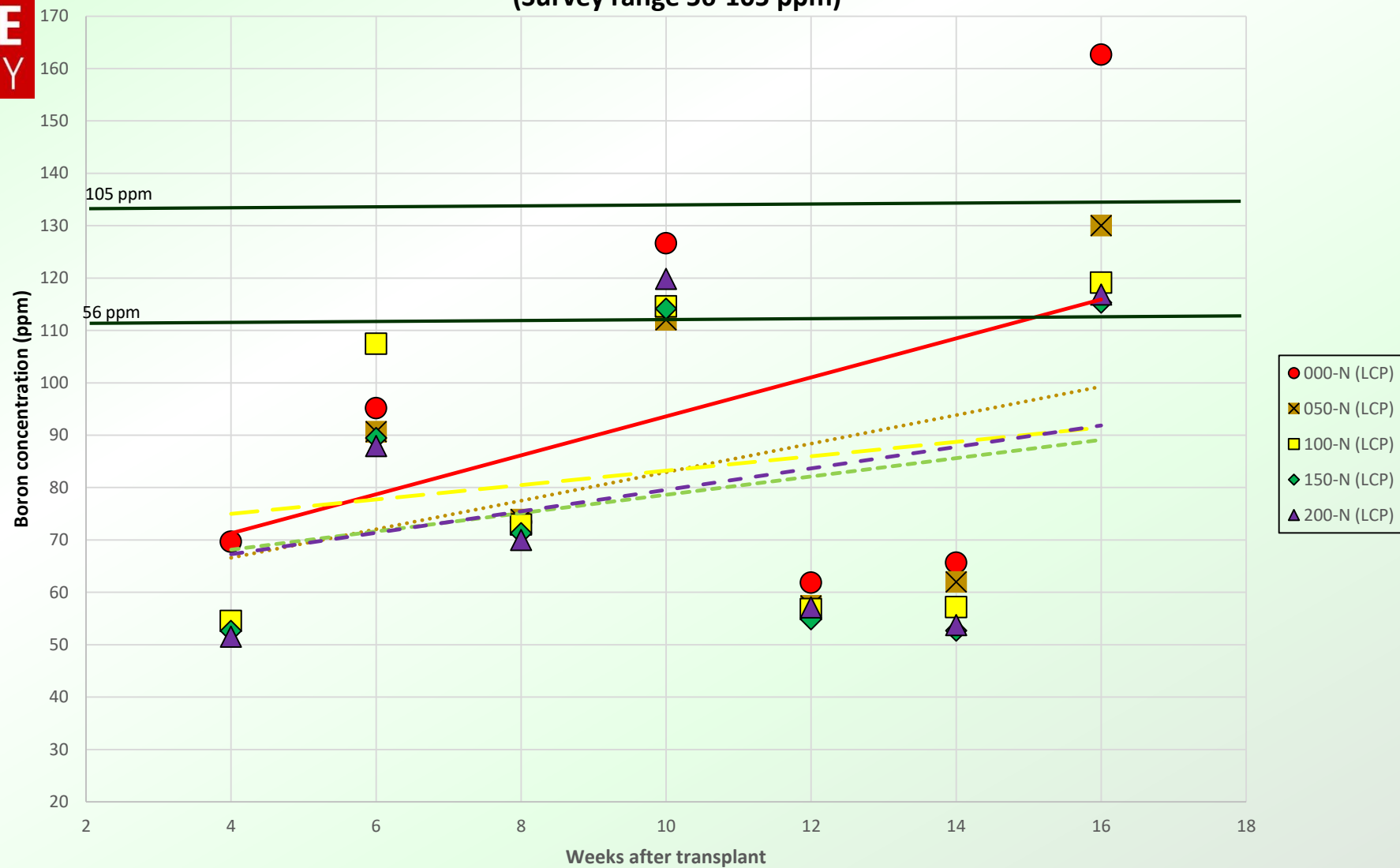
(Survey range 56-105 ppm)



## NITROGEN STUDY (Lower Coastal Plain)

Boron (B) leaf tissue concentrations over 16 weeks

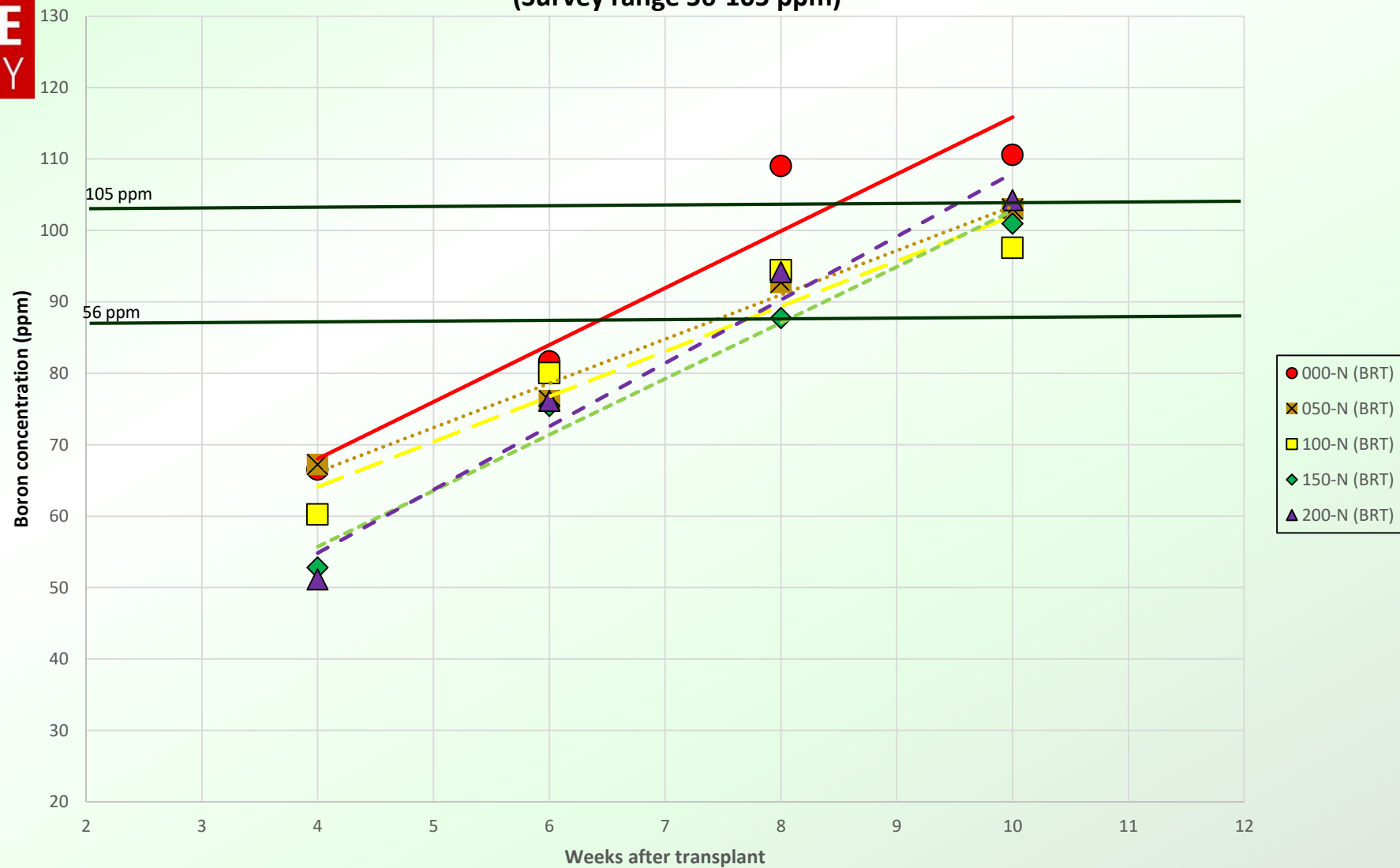
(Survey range 56-105 ppm)





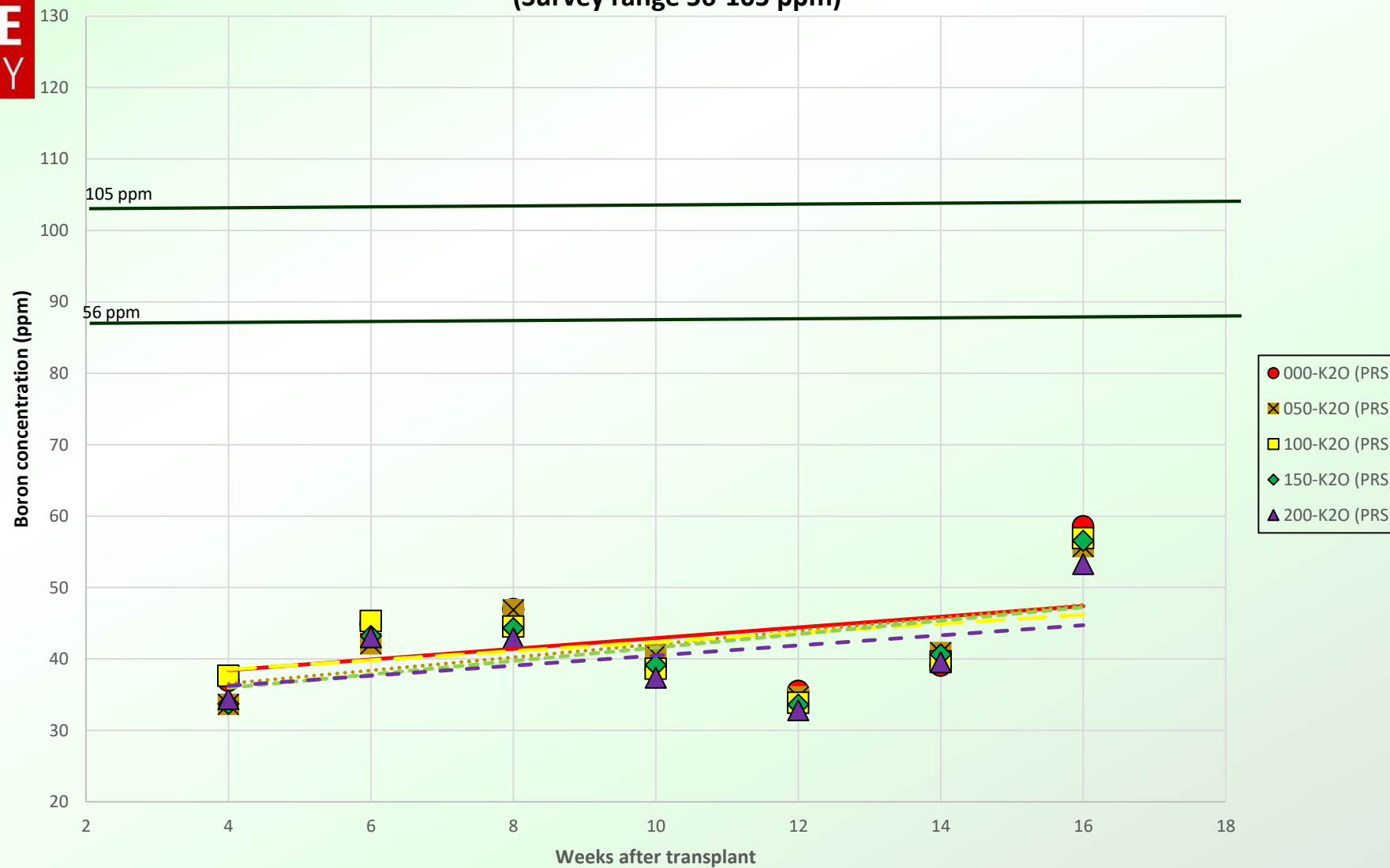
# NITROGEN STUDY (Bertie)

Boron (B) leaf tissue concentrations over 16 weeks  
 (Survey range 56-105 ppm)



## POTASSIUM STUDY (Piedmont)

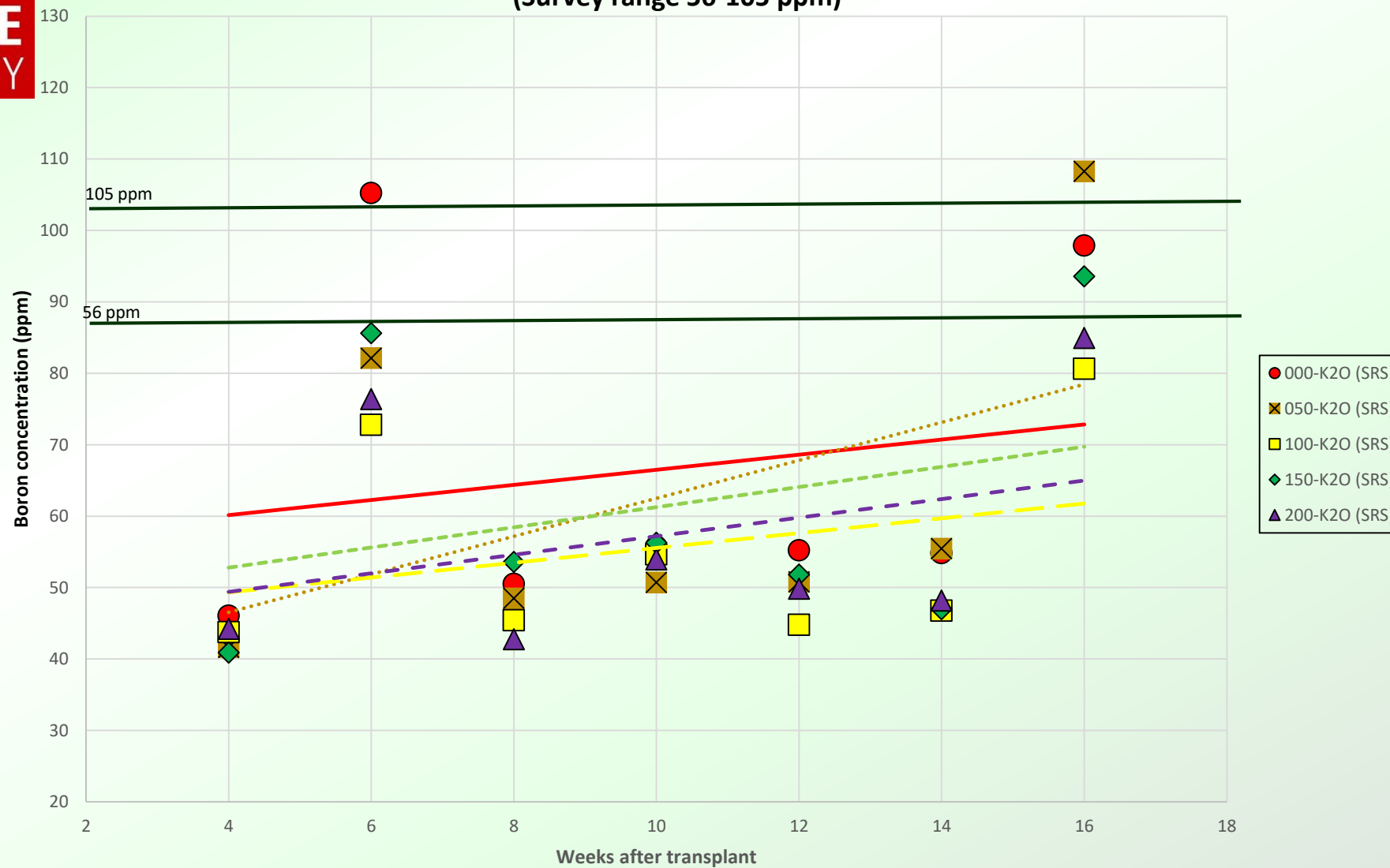
Boron (B) leaf tissue concentrations over 16 weeks  
(Survey range 56-105 ppm)





# POTASSIUM STUDY (Sandhills)

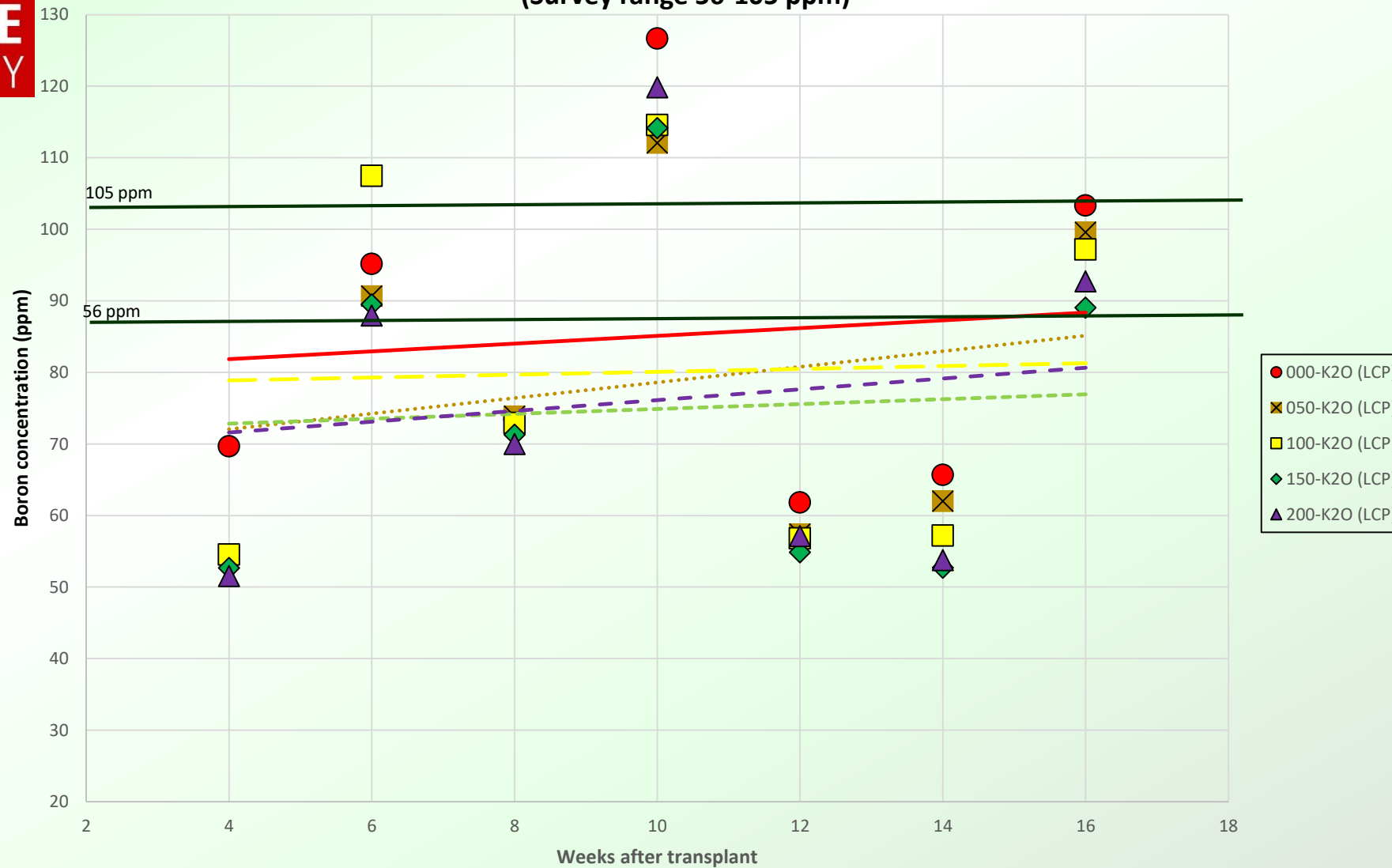
Boron (B) leaf tissue concentrations over 16 weeks  
(Survey range 56-105 ppm)



## POTASSIUM STUDY (Lower Coastal Plain)

Boron (B) leaf tissue concentrations over 16 weeks

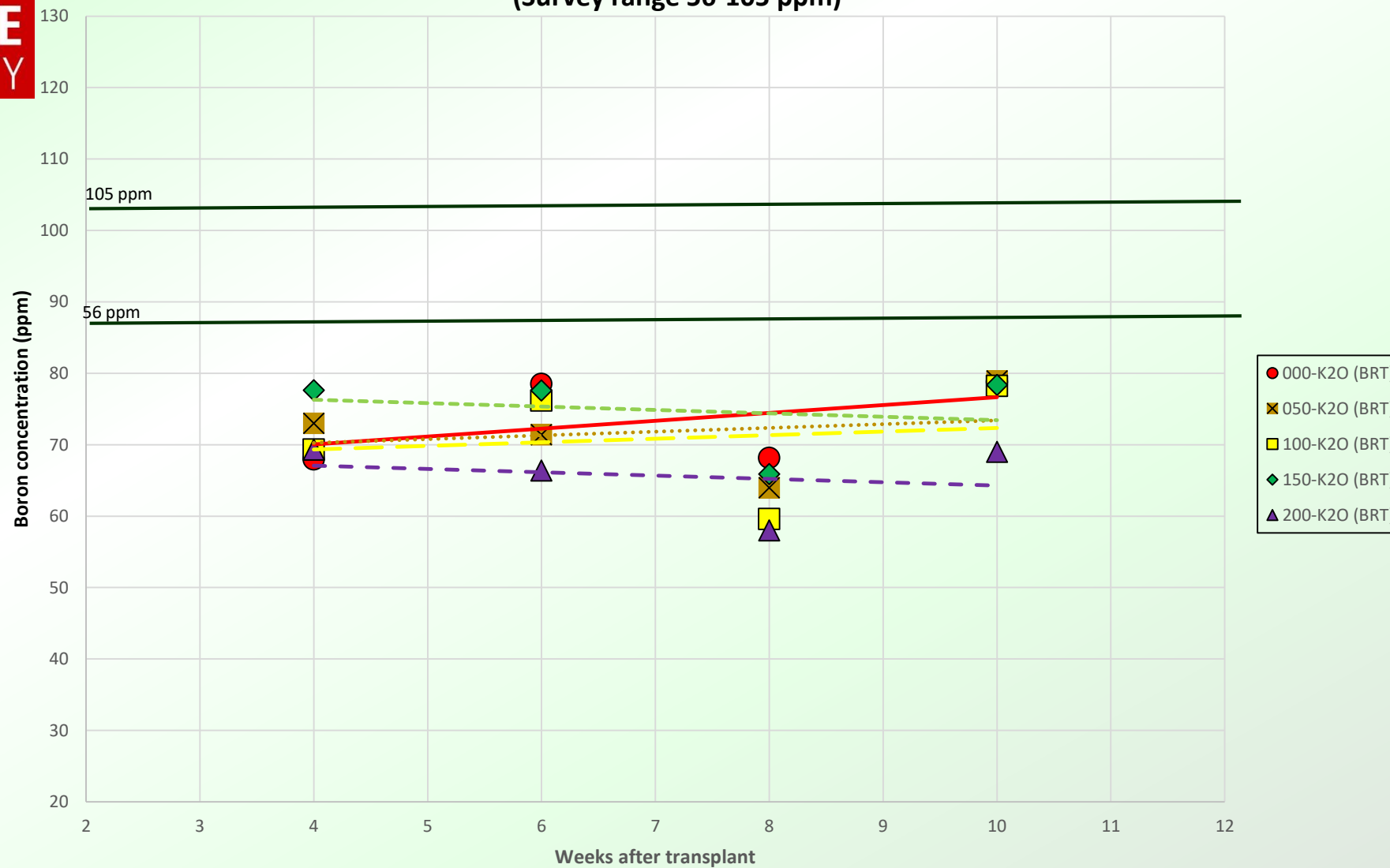
(Survey range 56-105 ppm)





# POTASSIUM STUDY (Bertie)

Boron (B) leaf tissue concentrations over 16 weeks  
(Survey range 56-105 ppm)



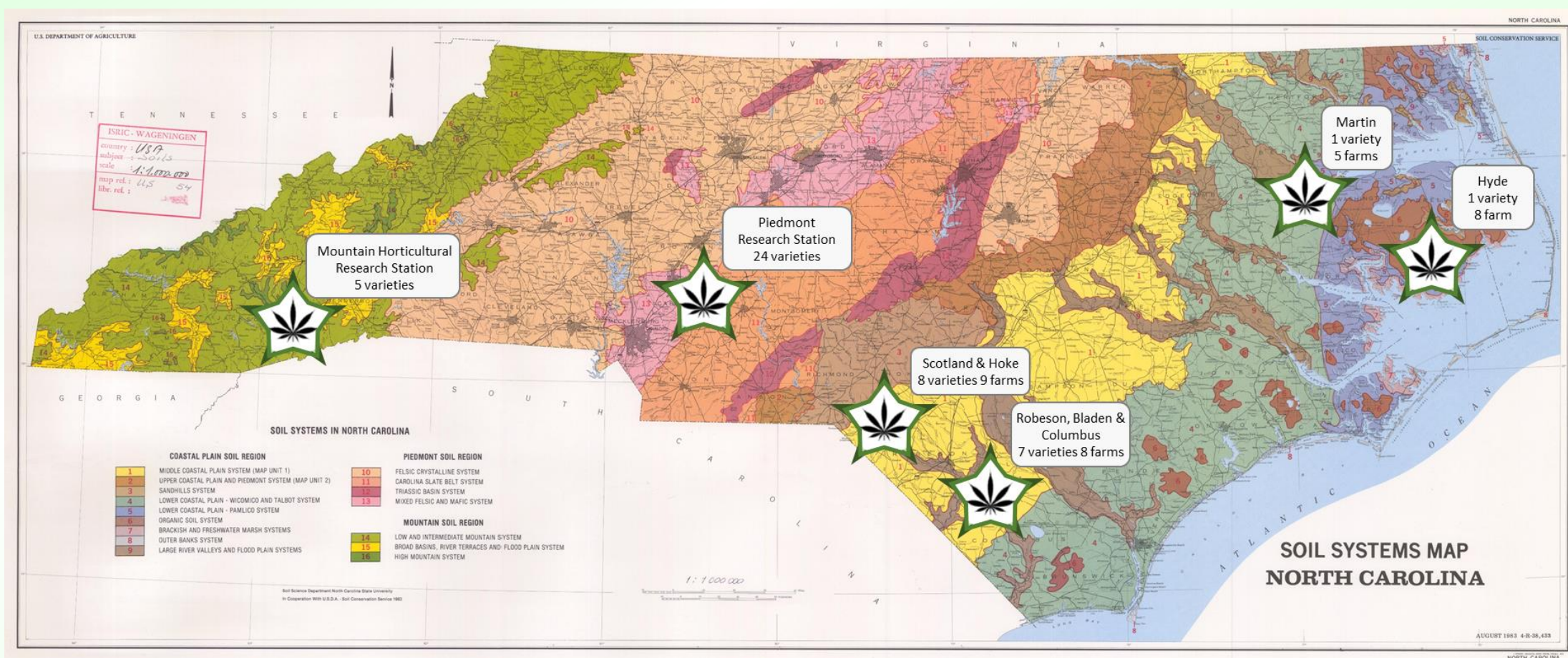


# Foliar Nutrient Survey for Floral Hemp Objectives

- **Ground-truth Bryson & Mills nutrient survey ranges to cultivars and environments specific to North Carolina**
- Conducted 2019; Again 2020
- Multiple cultivars (NCSU trials)
- Transplant sources (producer and clones/seeds)
- Fertility management / irrigation management
- Across the state

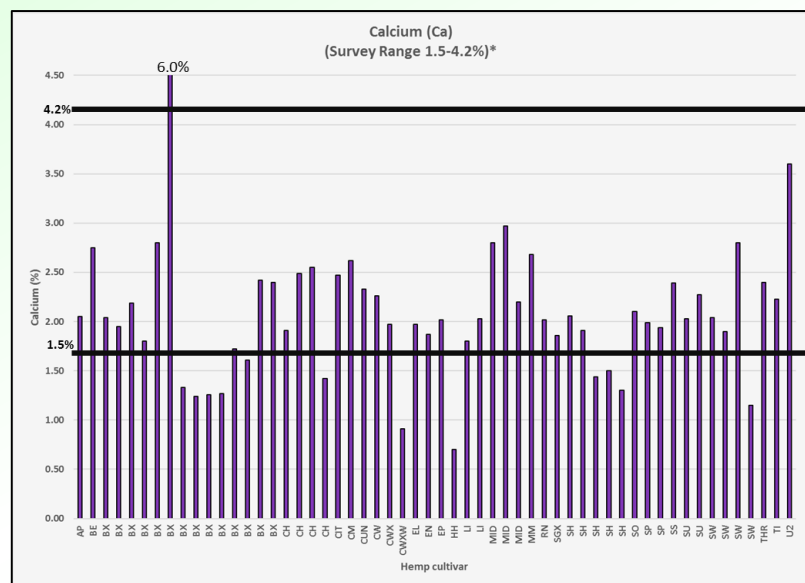


# Leaf Tissue Nutrient Survey Sample Locations

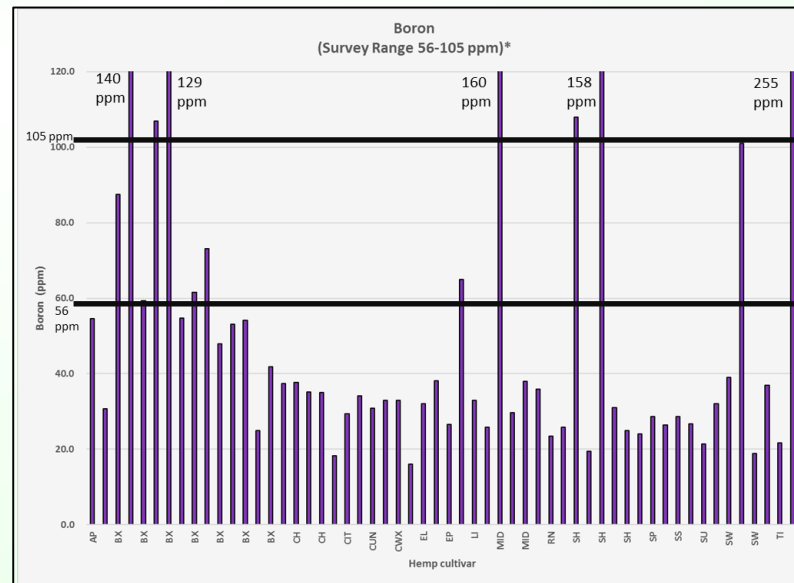


# Leaf Tissue Nutrient Survey

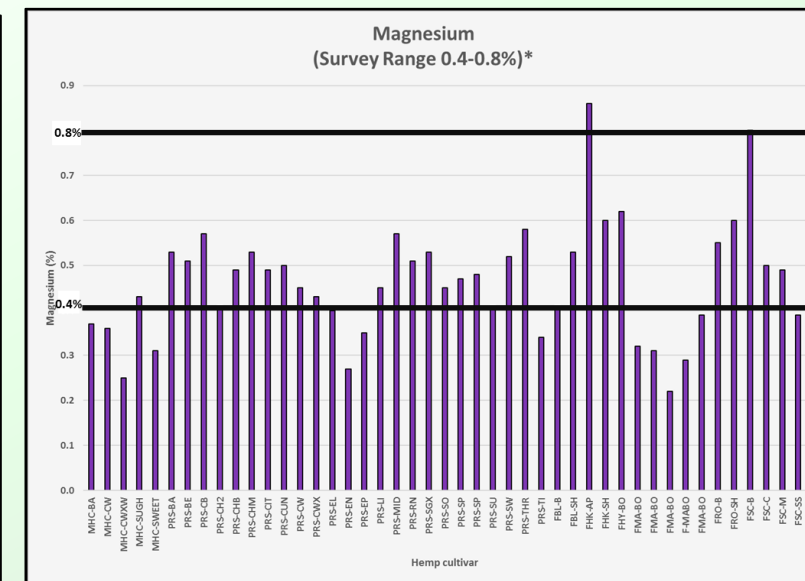
Calcium survey range 1.5-4.4%



Boron survey range 56-105 ppm



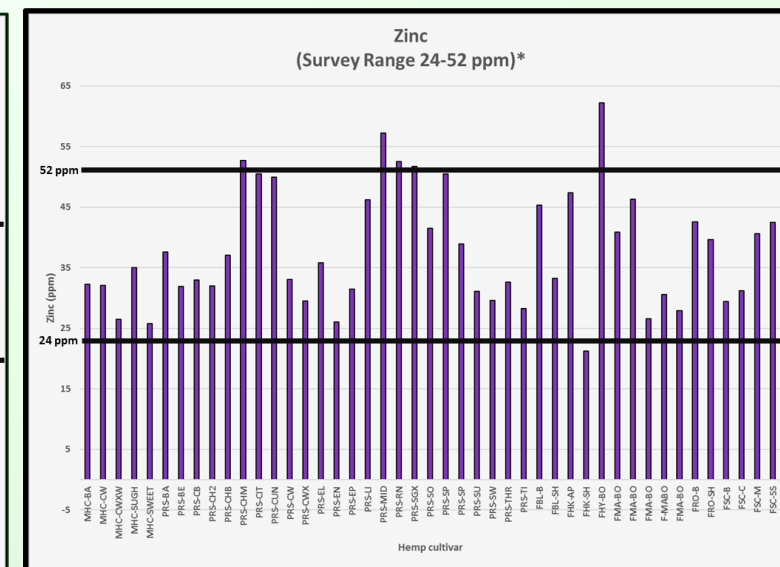
Magnesium survey range 0.4-0.8%



Ranges too high??



**Zinc survey range 24-52 ppm**



# Ranges reasonable??



# Ranges too narrow??





# Establishing Hemp Leaf Tissue Nutrient Sufficiency and Survey Ranges for North Carolina Production

- Results of N and K rate study will contribute to establishing N and K sufficiency ranges
- Observational data from the survey study will contribute to establishing survey ranges for the rest of the nutrients
- Also to be considered when establishing these ranges
  - Data collected by Dr. Kristin Hicks, Agronomic Plant Lab Section Chief
  - Data reported in Cockson, P.; Landis, H.; Smith, T.; Hicks, K.; Whipker, B.E. Characterization of Nutrient Disorders of *Cannabis sativa*. *Appl. Sci.* **2019**, *9*, 4432 <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-3417/9/20/4432>



# Super Team

- Maggie Short – MS Student
- Matthew Vann
- Keith Edmisten
- David Suchoff (welcome!)
- NCSU Tobacco Team
- Agronomic Field Services Team
- Research Stations
- Extension Agents











# Thank you for funding and support!



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**NC STATE UNIVERSITY**

