

SOIL TESTING: THE KEY TO GREAT GARDENS



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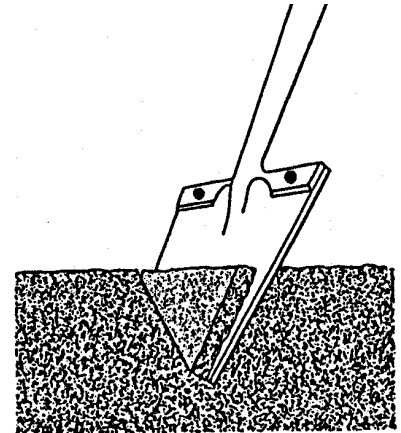
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Taking a Soil Sample

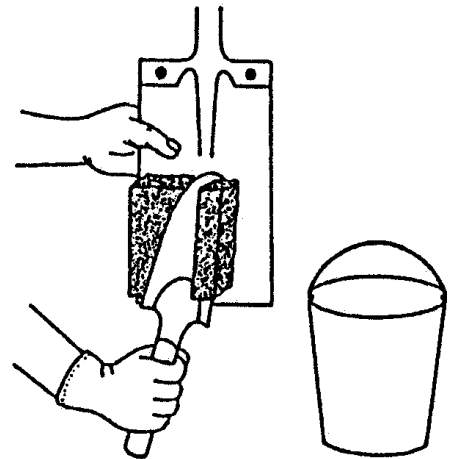
Before you plant your flowers, trees, shrubs or vegetable garden, you may need to take a soil test. A soil test reveals the organic matter content as well as the soil pH and nutrient levels. A soil test also serves as an indicator for what amendments may be needed, and it provides a baseline for comparison in future years.

Follow these steps for an accurate soil test.

- Gather small amounts of soil from seven or eight well-scattered locations in your lawn or garden. Do not mix lawn soil with garden soil—separate samples are needed to test both of these areas. Do not take samples where fertilizer has spilled or where manure has been piled. Take out any leaves, sticks, stones or other debris in the samples.
- Mix together the samples of soil—either lawn OR garden.
- Dry the mixed sample at room temperature.
- Wrap the sample in a sturdy half-pint container.
- Make a label for the container:
 - state what will be grown (lawn grass, vegetables, azaleas)
 - include your name, address, and phone number
 - specify lawn and garden soil testing
- Take or mail the sample to a soil testing laboratory. Find out what the testing fee is and include payment with the sample. Call your local U of I Extension office to find a soil lab in your area. Or, check out the list of testing labs at this website: <http://urbanext.illinois.edu/soiltest/>



You can take a soil sample without a soil probe. Use a spade or trowel to remove a slice of soil 7 inches deep.



Place a 1-inch section of this slice in a pail. Get similar sections of soil from other random locations of your lawn or garden. Mix the soil in the pail. Remove about 1/2 pint of the soil. Dry at room temperature and place in a container.



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