

SOIL TESTING

Soil testing can provide useful information on the proper amount of lime and fertilizer needed for lawns, flower beds, gardens, etc. Soil testing can also diagnose nutrient deficiencies or toxicities for poorly growing plants. It is very important that the soil be collected properly for sampling.

To collect samples, use a soil probe, hand garden trowel, shovel or spade. Mix soil or sub-samples in a clean, plastic bucket. If fertilizer and/or other chemicals have been used in the bucket, wash and rinse thoroughly before using it for soil sampling. Residue from fertilizer or lime can contaminate the sample and produce inaccurate results.

Areas to avoid testing are small areas where soil is obviously different from the rest of the landscape such as low lying wet areas, yard or landscape borders, ditches, severely eroded areas and fence rows.

If the lawn has healthy and poor growing areas, soil test both areas separately. By comparing the results, the soil test may point out troubles that exist due to lack of nutrients and/or incorrect pH.

Dig down, at an angle, about 6 inches. Dig right behind the first cut and use the slice of soil, as in the example. Homeowners should take 10 samples randomly throughout the area to be tested. Field samples should include approximately 20 sub-samples within each acre via random location (walk zigzags throughout the plot and pull samples randomly). Mix these soil-samples together and bring approximately 1 pint of the mix to the soil lab.

You can bring it in a plastic bag (and transfer it into the box) or you can stop by the UT/TSU Williamson County Extension Office and pick up a soil test kit, which consists of an information sheet and a soil sample box. Fill out the information sheet as complete and accurately as possible. Fill the box to the top with loose soil and label it with your name and sample identifier. Choose a unique identifier that will help you remember the area it corresponds to ... such as GARDN, BACK, FRONT, ROSE, etc. and bring it to your local Extension Office (4215 Long Lane, suite 200 in Franklin, TN 37064).

The fees for testing your soil are \$18.00 for the plus test which includes evaluation of water pH, P, K, Ca, Mg, Zn, Mn, Fe, Cu, Na, and B. Lime and fertilizer recommendations based on crop codes submitted. Organic matter content and soluble salt levels, among several other tests are offered for an additional fee (see soil and media information sheet).

You should receive your results within 7–10 days, depending on the time of year. For more information, contact the **UT/TSU Williamson County Extension Office** at **615-790-5721** or visit our website at <https://williamson.tennessee.edu>. Useful information can also be found by visiting the as well as the UT Soil, Plant and Pest Center website (<https://ag.tennessee.edu/spp/Pages/soiltesting.aspx>).

