

Soil Testing

Oftentimes, about mid growing season, we wonder what we are doing so wrong that causes our plants to look so weak and sometimes sickly. After all, we fertilized. Nitrogen, Phosphate, Potassium . . .what else do we need? Yes, we need to fertilize, but we need to fertilize smartly!

Giving our lawns and gardens what they need and the minerals and elements required for proper absorption can only be determined by a soil test. Blanket application without test results may result in a waste of time, money, and effort. More importantly, they may pose serious environmental problems such as excess chemicals flowing into waterways.

Soil tests provide a scientific basis for evaluating available plant nutrients in lawns and gardens as well as in cropland and pastures. Soil sample analysis can help homeowners and farmers fine-tune nutrient applications from fertilizers, bio solids, and animal manure.

The test instructions are as follows:

Soil Test Instructions:

A basic soil test, including pH (degree of alkalinity or acidity) and the basic nutrients of Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium costs \$10 each. Cash or check is accepted. Receipt of the test results from OSU generally takes 2-3 weeks. Caution - do not sample an area which has received fertilizer within the past two months as this will give a false reading.

The steps for obtaining the sample are as follows:

1. Using a trowel, shovel or soil probe, obtain six inch samples of soil, removing all grass and trash. Each area of interest, such as lawn, vegetable garden, pasture or field should be tested separately.
2. Obtain 10-15 random sub-samples from the area you want tested. To obtain a representative sample, divide the area and follow a random pattern when sampling. Avoid unusual spots, like wet areas.
3. Place the sub-samples in a clean plastic bucket, mix thoroughly by hand, and submit a pint of this mixture in a clear zip-lock bag. Samples should not be saturated, but fairly dry.
4. Bring the soil sample(s) to the **OSU Extension Office located at 4116 East 15th Street (on 15th street, between Harvard and Yale)** or call 918-746-3707 for more information.

Additionally, OSU Fact Sheets contain more detailed information, as follows:

[PSS-2207](#) (How to Get a Good Soil Sample)

[L-249](#) (Soil Testing...the Right First Step)