

## **SOIL TESTING - FALL IS A GOOD TIME**

During the next several weeks of our fall season, homeowners are presented with a perfect time to do soil testing for both the lawn and garden soils. Taking soil samples now will give you enough time to apply any nutrient changes that might be needed as shown on your tests before springtime planting arrives.

It has been suggested by the OSU Extension Agency that you should take soil samples every 2 to 3 years. It is important, but especially important, that this be done if you are repeatedly planting the same plants in the same beds year after year.

How easy is it to take samples? There are Fact Sheets on Soil Testing available for you online and at our office. The main fact sheet central to this subject is [PSS-2207](#). Based on that, here are a few of the suggested methods for getting proper amounts of soil and which kinds of soils are acceptable.

Using a clean trowel or similar tool, collect between one pint and one quart of moist (not wet!) soil that is clear of any roots, grass stems, thatch, leaves, mulch, etc. Samples should be taken at a depth of 4" to 6" inches below the surface. As you take each sample, put them into a CLEAN bucket or plastic bag. ("Clean" prevents you from getting a false reading). A minimum of 12-15 trowel-sized samples should be collected from the area, put into a bucket, and then stirred to thoroughly mix up the soil. This will give a good average and representative reading of the area collected. The area where samples were collected should NOT have been fertilized within the last 60 days as this will lead to a false reading. If it has been fertilized, make sure this is noted on your application.

Do not mix lawn samples with garden samples as each has differing nutrient needs and will lead to inaccurate recommendations and results. Also, if you are collecting from both front and back yards, it is better to keep those samples also separated and labelled. This non-mixing of different areas will produce more accurate and proper soil test results. It is very important that you put samples into clean, separate containers in order to get a correct reading. When samples are brought to our office, you will be asked to identify what area you wish to have tests on: Garden, Lawn, or other.

**A good reminder: "Soil test results are only as good as the samples taken".**

The routine soil test will include the pH (Alkalinity or Acidity) and the level of basic soil nutrients (Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium), or NPK. Soil sample tests are \$10 per test. Turnaround time is approximately 2-3 weeks to receive the test results complete with recommendations to correct for any deficiencies. Bring the soil sample(s) to:

OSU EXTENSION OFFICE  
4116 East 15<sup>th</sup> Street  
(Gate 6 at Tulsa Fair Grounds)

Other related information is available on our web site by going to [tulsamastergardeners.org](http://tulsamastergardeners.org), click on **Lawn & Garden**, then **Soil**.

You may also talk to a Tulsa Master Gardener in person by calling **918 – 746 - 3701** or visiting the office anytime between 9:00 a.m. to 4:00.p.m. Monday through Friday.