



OSU Extension Center
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Soil Test instructions

Soil tests provide a scientific basis for evaluating available plant nutrients in cropland, pastures, lawns, and gardens. Analyses of soil samples can help farmers and homeowners fine-tune nutrient applications from fertilizers, biosolids, and animal manure. Properly managing the amount of nutrients added to the soil can save money and protect the environment.

A basic soil test, including pH (degree of alkalinity or acidity) and nutrients Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium, costs \$10.00 cash or check and generally takes two to three weeks for the results of the tests. 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 or similar tool, obtain six inch samples of soil, removing all grass and trash.
2. Each area of interest, such as a lawn or vegetable garden should be tested separately.
3. Obtain at least fifteen (15) or more random sub-samples from the area you want tested. Divide the area and follow a random pattern when sampling. Avoid unusual spots, like a wet area, and try to obtain a representative sample.
4. Place the sub-samples in a plastic bucket, mix thoroughly by hand, and submit a pint of this mixture in a zip-lock bag to the extension office. Samples should not be saturated, but fairly dry.

Extension offices will mail your samples to the OSU Soil, Water and Forage Analytical Laboratory and mail written recommendations to you.