

Soil Sampling Instructions

It's growing the season, and you're getting ready to plant the best and most vibrant garden produce you have ever grown. This is all due to your choice to maximize your growing potential by testing your soil nutrients.

It's an all-too-common practice for gardeners to apply too much (or incorrect) fertilizer or other garden nutrient product to their soil. Knowing your nutrient levels *before* you treat your soil is your best course of action.

The best time to sample is when your soil is suitable for tilling (late fall or early spring). This gives you enough time to receive your soil test results, interpret them and, if needed, add nutrients.

Where to Sample?

Your goal is to obtain a representative sample of your growing area. To do this, you want to sample your soil from different points and composite them into a single sample.

The more sampling points you composite the better. By compositing your soil sampling, your test results will reflect the average nutrient levels at each sampling point.

Sampling Recommendations:

- Take a look at your garden area and divide this area into a simple grid pattern like the one shown in figure 1. The dots represent the sampling point at the center of each 25 ft² (square foot) area.
- We recommend that you take one sample every 25 ft².
- It is good practice to mark your sampling points for later reference. (This ensures that you will be able to sample from the same points in the future and allows for better comparisons between tests).
- Make sure that the soil you are going to sample is of one soil type or area. Gardens and lawns should be sampled separately, as well as healthy and unhealthy looking areas.
- When sampling row crops in your garden, sample between the rows in order to avoid fertilizer bands.
- Avoid brass, bronze, or galvanized tools. They can contaminate your soil sample with Copper and Zinc.

Figure 1
250 Square Foot Area
(25 ft² / Box)

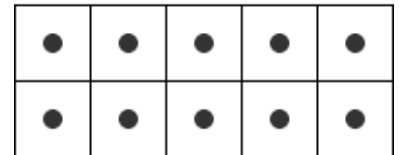


Figure 2

Growing Area	Recommended Sampling Depth (inches)
Garden plants, shrubs, and flower beds	6 – 8
Turf	3
Tree root zones	8 – 12

What you need:

- **Shovel or Spade:** Stainless steel or chrome-plated.
- **Plastic Container:** You will need a plastic container for soil mixing. Container must be free of any previous soil residue or possible contamination. Container should be cleaned with hot soapy water (make sure to use soap or detergent that is *phosphate-free*).

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Sampling Procedure

1. **Determine your sampling points.**
2. **Dig Sampling Holes**
 - Using a stainless steel or chrome-plated spade or shovel, dig a V-shaped hole at each of your sampling points and set aside the removed soil.
 - Dig to the appropriate sampling depth for your type of growing area (refer to chart in *Figure 2*).
3. **Take Soil Samples**
 - Cut a uniform slice (about an inch thick) from the side of your sample hole. Cut the slice from the top of the hole to the bottom. Remove any debris or foreign material from the slice (such as rocks, roots, and twigs) and break up any soil clumps.
 - Using the plastic scoop provided in your sample kit, take a single scoop from the soil slice and place into your pre-cleaned plastic container.
 - Repeat these steps at each of your sampling holes.

Note: Make sure you sample the same quantity of soil from each sampling point.
4. **Mix & Dry**
 - Once you have completed adding the soil from each sampling point into the container, mix thoroughly and allow the soil to dry.
 - ❖ Allow the soil to dry at room temperature and keep the soil from direct sunlight.
Do not use heat to dry the soil.
 - ❖ Once the soil in the container is completely dry, mix thoroughly again to assure complete uniformity.
5. **Final Composite Sample**
 - Using the plastic scoop provided in your sampling kit, place approximately 10 scoops of your composited soil into the provided plastic sampling bag.
 - Remove as much air from the sample bag as possible and lock both seals at the top of the plastic sample bag.
 - Fold the top (locked seal area) of the sample bag over and tape it down to ensure the bags seals cannot unzip and open during shipping.
 - **Place soil sample bag into the shipping container along with your *Sample Information Form*.**
 - ❖ Refer to your *Sample Shipping Instructions* for more details regarding the *Sample Information Form* and sample shipping.

Note: Do not place the Sample Information Form into the soil in the soil sample bag. Keep them separate within the shipping container.