

Douglas County Master Gardeners Soils Lab

How To Take A Soil Sample

Soil testing can be done any time your soil isn't frozen or overly wet. The best time of year for sampling is in spring or fall. Sampling new lawn or garden areas several months in advance allows time for making recommended adjustments prior to planting. Plan to provide soil samples for each area that you'll be planting. Established lawns, for example, need different nutrition than gardens or new lawns. So, area-specific samples will deliver area-specific results and recommendations. Sample front and back yards separately; conditions will vary for each.

1. Get a shovel, a plastic bucket or container, and a garden trowel. Be sure each is clean of any contaminating chemicals or dirt.
2. Pick a typical spot six by six inches, remove any plants, scrape mulch and leaf litter from the soil surface. Dig a hole 6 to 8 inches (15.2 to 20.3 cm) deep, and set this shovelful aside.
3. Use the trowel or shovel to scrape down one side of the hole digging out a half inch vertical section of soil, so you get a representative of the vertical part of the hole as well as the bottom and place it in the bucket.
4. Collect a number of cores or slices by walking in a zig-zag pattern over the area. Consider 5-10 cores as the minimum for home gardens and lawns up to 10,000 square feet in size. Larger areas should be represented by at least 15 to 20 samples.
5. Mix cores thoroughly in a clean pail for a composite lab sample. Remove anything that is not soil such as roots, worms, rocks. The greater the number of collected cores mixed together, the better the sample will represent the average condition of the sampled area.
6. Fill a plastic bag or container with 2 cups of the mixed soil. Soil needs to be quite dry for testing so you may want to let it dry some before bringing it in.

Soil Samples may be dropped off during regular business hours of 9am to 4pm at the OSU Extension Office located at 1134 SE Douglas Ave, Roseburg, OR 97470 (next door to the courthouse)

The charge for soil testing is \$20 per sample, payable via cash or check when sample is brought in.

Results will be mailed/emailed to you within 2-3 weeks, depending upon whether the sample comes to the lab dry or is in need of time to dry thoroughly before testing.

Feel free to contact us via email at mg.soils.lab@gmail.com if you have any questions.