

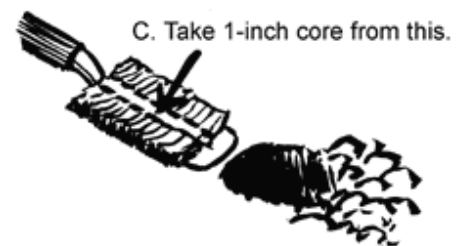
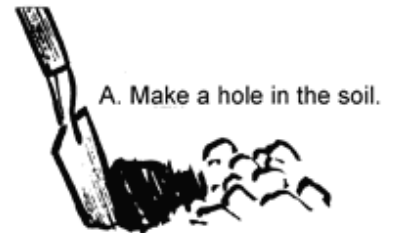
HOW TO TAKE A SOIL SAMPLE

Anytime is the best time to take a soil sample, although in fall and winter the nutrients are more stable, barren flower beds are more easily accessed, you'll have more time to plan for your garden's needs, and test facilities are not overwhelmed with samples to test which means you will get a quicker response.

Why take a soil sample? If you don't know the condition of your soil, you could be wasting lots of time and money on fertilizers and other soil additives that you don't need. It is also very helpful to know the nutrient and PH levels in your soil when selecting plants as some prefer more nitrogen, others need low PH to do well, etc. There is a nominal cost for the soil sample, however, the cost will be returned to you many times over in savings of fertilizer and plants, higher yields and quality produce.

Decide what soil areas you want to test. Do you want to have one sample for your whole property or separate reports for the lawn, vegetable garden, and flowerbed, etc?

- Clear away all surface debris such as mulch, turf, etc. Be sure the spot you have selected is not where the soil is unique or unusual for this bed or lawn (ex. recent or unique fertilizer use, more or less rocky than the rest of the test area, spilled chemicals, along a concrete walk, drive, or foundation, etc.).
- Dig a hole 6" deep for gardens, 4" deep for lawns.
- With your shovel, take a 1" thick shaving from the side of the hole, down the full depth of the hole.
- Discard all but a 1" wide strip from the center of your shovel, which you will place into a clean plastic bucket. A clean plastic bucket will preserve the sample better than a metal bucket that may give off some elements into the soil. A dirty bucket may also contaminate your sample.
- Repeat the above steps in this same garden or lawn 3-10 more times. The more samples you obtain, the more reliable your test will be.
- Thoroughly mix the 4-11 samples together in a plastic bucket.
- Spread some paper in a cool, full shade location (an area of the garage often works well) and pour out the soil so it can dry for a day or two.
- Label your soil test box with your name and address, etc. (and garden name if you want separate test results for different gardens) before you assemble the box.
- Discard all stones, roots and debris from your sample. Transfer about a cup of soil to the soil sample boxes provided by the University of Missouri Extension.



- Take your soil sample to the University of Missouri Extension office at **833 Boonville Avenue; Springfield, MO 65802** along with the required fee. The Extension office will have an additional page of information for you to fill out.

You will receive your report in 2-3 weeks, indicating nutrient levels in your soil as well as PH, organic matter, and more. This information can help you in choosing the appropriate soil additives for your garden and what plants may grow well for you, giving you a more rewarding gardening experience.

Mark Bernskoetter 4/2008