

HOW TO TAKE A SOIL SAMPLE

Follow these simple steps to insure a proper representative soil sample or samples:

1. Identify where you want to take samples from.
2. Select the proper sampling tools. A clean garden spade, trowel or large spoon will be sufficient.
3. Don't sample unusual areas because you could get an inaccurate sample. Always avoid back furrows and dead furrows, windbreaks, drainage ditches, snow fence or old fence lines, old manure piles, wet spots, areas near a stone pile or large tree. (Samples of these specific areas should be submitted separately.)
4. When necessary, divide lawn or garden area into separate, sample areas, especially when it's a large area ½ - 1 acre, or more, in size. Also take separate samples when the area has specific differences in it, such as steep slope, bottomland, low area, a dip, or so on.
5. Take soil from at least 10 to 15 spots in each area. Scrape away surface litter. Take a small amount of soil from a depth of 3 to 6 inches (the depth to which the garden will be spaded, roto-tilled or plowed, or root zone of the plant you are testing for.)
6. Mix these several soil samples together thoroughly in a clean pail or container.
7. Spread soil on a cookie sheet or foil plate to air dry for a few days. Be sure to remove all stones, plant material and large chunks of soil.
8. After soil is dried, place about 2 cups of this dried soil into a clean container such as a butter tub or coffee can.
9. Label sample clearly with name and address and for what is growing or will be planted: vegetables, lawn, fruits, etc.; where the sample was taken: back lawn, north end of garden, low part or garden etc. Samples can be labels by location, number or letter, but be sure to keep your own records as to where these samples were taken from.
10. Deliver to either Cornell Cooperative Extension Office (in Hudson: 479 Route 66, Hudson, 12534 or Acra, 6055 Rt 23, Acra, NY 12405) and fill out the information sheet for each sample. If dropped off when the Hudson office is closed, leave in the drop-off box by the front door. Be sure containers are well labeled with your name, mailing address and phone number, and place appropriate fee in envelope.
11. Within a week or two you will receive the test results which will explain what the results are and what, if any, lime should be applied to improve or maintain the tested areas.
12. There is a charge of \$3.00 with results being sent to the same address, to help defray the cost of providing this service.

Master Gardener Volunteers can be reached at 518-828-3346 x212 in Hudson and 518-622-9820 x110 in Acra. Their email is colgremg@cornell.edu.