

Soil Testing

Lawns and Gardens



For proper management, a soil test for available nutrients should be made every 3-5 years. This will help prevent over application of nutrients from fertilizers and other sources.

Proper collection of a soil sample is important. Test results will be no better than the sample collected. Accuracy of analysis depends on the collection of a representative soil sample.

Try to take samples when the soil is not wet. If your samples are wet, spread the soil out to **AIR DRY, do not use heat**, before sending them in. Sampling probes and bags may be obtained at many of your local Extension offices.

Follow these steps to obtain a good sample:

1. Lawn soils should be tested before planting, if possible. From each lawn or garden area, take at least 10 cores or slice samples to properly represent the area.
 - Collect soil 6-8 inches deep for the standard test (nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium and soil pH (Lime requirements)).
 - Avoid sampling in old fence rows, along limestone rock roads, low spots and other areas that might give misleading results. If information is desired on these unusual areas, obtain a sample from them.
2. For each desired area, collect samples into a clean **PLASTIC container** and mix thoroughly. Remove any stones, grass, roots or "thatch".
3. Put one cup of the soil mixture into a paper bag.
4. Clearly label your bag: Garden, Backyard, etc. so you know where it represents.
5. Take representative samples to your local Extension office.

Note: The Shawnee County Conservation District Non-Point Source Pollution Program promotes soil testing by paying a portion of the fees for analysis. Funding provided by the Division of Conservation, Kansas Dept. of Agriculture through appropriation from the Kansas Water Plan Fund. For payment, areas being tested must be within the boundaries of Shawnee County, Kansas. Samples must be taken to: Shawnee County Extension Office, 1740 SW Western Avenue, Topeka, Kansas 66604-3095, phone: 785-232-0062.