



# Soil Test

**Testing your soil is an essential step for a natural approach to lawn care. There is no way to know what your lawn needs without one!**

## What is a soil test?

An easy and inexpensive way to determine your soil's level of nutrients, pH and organic matter.

## Why should I test my soil?

Healthy soil is the key to a great looking lawn, but it is impossible to know what your soil needs without doing a soil test. Levels of pH, nutrients and organic matter all impact plant growth. For example, nutrient levels that are too low will slow plant growth, and levels that are too high can pollute our waterways and may inhibit plant growth. A soil test will save you time and money by telling you to add only what your soil needs.

## What will my soil test tell me?

- Soil pH
- Levels of the nutrients phosphorus (P), potassium (K), calcium (Ca), magnesium (Mg) and sulfur (S)
- Amount of organic matter
- If there is lead contamination
- Fertilizer and lime needs

## When & how should I test my soil?

A soil test should be done at least every three years and before you decide to add any fertilizer or lime to your lawn. The ideal time of year to test your soil is mid to late spring or early fall. Free soil test kits are available from county extension offices or your local Soil and Water Conservation District.



## How do I collect my soil sample?

1. Using a clean spade or trowel, take several samples in different locations on your lawn. Try to remove any large leaves, roots and sticks from your sample.
2. Mix the samples in a clean container and put roughly 1/2 cup in a zip-top bag.
3. Label the bag with your name, address and sample identification (e.g. front lawn), and place it in the sample box. If you are sending multiple samples, each must be placed in a separate sample box.
4. Complete the accompanying form (Note: the crop code for existing lawns is 201; the crop code for new lawns is 211). Remove the top copy and send to the lab with your sample. Keep the remaining copies for your records.
5. Place the sample box, form and payment in a mailing container and send it to the soil testing service at the address on the form.

Your results should arrive in two to three weeks.

Information contained in this fact sheet adapted from University of Maine Cooperative Extension Bulletin #2286, Testing Your Soil.

