

Soil Sampling Guide

Soil analysis is necessary for any fertility program, especially today when farmers want to maximize yields and profits while minimizing costs. Soil tests can help determine and overcome:

- Acidic soils
- Low yields due to lack of fertility
- Using the wrong fertilizer
- Wasting fertilizer to maximize yields

As a rule, test soils every year for a field that is on crop rotation, or every 2 years when growing the same crop. Testing is used as a guideline for a specific crop.

The soil sample must be representative of the field being sampled. Therefore, a good sampling method is important in getting good soil test results.

When to Sample:

Soil sampling can be done at any time, but remember the following:

- Spring sampling tends to leave one short when requiring fertilizer and limestone recommendations for planting that year
- Fall sampling assures you that your results are returned in time for your next planting and allows for appropriate planning
- Early fall sampling allows you to receive results for fall liming

Tools Required:

Uniformity of samples is necessary for representative field samples. Tools required are:

- A soil auger or probe (or a shovel or spade)
- A clean pail for mixing
- Sample bags



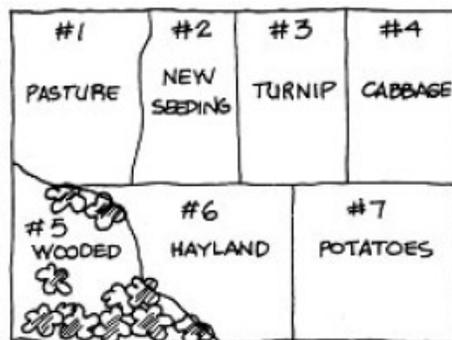
Note: Sample bags can be paper bags or Ziploc plastic bags and must be clean and free of any contamination.

Taking Samples:

Make sure you have completed the following: map of the farm indicating the crop to be grown in the field(s), and ensure a number is assigned to each field. Use the same field numbers as used in previous soil test submissions.

Samples should be taken from each field that appears uniform. Sections to be sampled separately are:

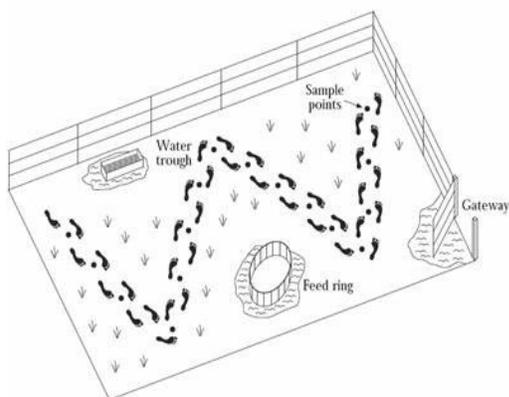
- Bottom and uplands soil
- Large low or poorly drained areas
- Soils of different colour and texture
- Soils of different liming, fertilizing, or cropping practices



Note: Avoid sampling in areas where organic waste or lime has been piled; and areas close to trees, fence-lines, roads or windrows.

Walk a “W” pattern and take ten (10) individual samples from each field 5 hectares or less (**submit one sample per 5 hectares**).

A soil probe or auger is the best tool for taking soil samples, but more often a shovel is readily available. If a shovel is being used, follow these directions:



Dig a V-shaped hole in the soil, being careful to clear away the surface litter.



Take a slice down one side of the hole to a depth of 20 cm. Six (6) cm is suitable for sod crops.



Trim both sides of this slice to leave a 3-cm width of soil. This is an individual sample to be placed in a clean pail. Take 10 such samples and mix them thoroughly to make a representative, or composite, field sample.



Take about 500 grams (2 cups) of the soil and place it in a soil sample bag and seal it.

Sample Submission:

Complete the **Soil and Growth Media Sample Submission Form** with relevant information needed. Ensure the field size and crops to be grown are specified. You may make note of year and time of a previous application of limestone and how much per hectare was applied, and any problems that may have occurred in the past.

Make sure to include information on the front of the soil sample bags, especially field number(s), along with your name and date the sample was taken.

Note: Where no crop to be grown is specified, fertilizer and limestone recommendations cannot be made.

Send soil samples and the completed **Soil and Growth Media Sample Submission Form** with fee to the lab (address indicated in the header of this guide). The lab accepts cheques and debit/credit payments. Credit payments can be processed over the phone at 709.729.6738

For more information, contact the Soil Fertility Specialist at 709.729.1055