



Testing the pH of Your Soil

What is pH ?

- pH is a measure of the acidity of the soil.
- The pH scale runs from 1 to 14 where:
pH < 7 is acidic, pH = 7 neutral, pH > 7 is basic.



Why do I need to test the pH of my soil ?

- Nutrients and acidity can change with time and use.
- Acidity controls the availability of nutrients and beneficial organisms.
- Plants have different requirements.
Blueberries and rhododendron need acidic soil, pH 4.5 to 5.5.
Vegetables grow best in pH 6.0 to 7.0.
- Lime or sulfur may be needed to correct pH imbalance.

Where can have my soil tested ?

- Evaluated for free by Master Gardeners at local farmers markets and fairs.
See web site for days and times: <http://wmmga.org>
- Evaluated for fee by UMass Soil Testing Laboratory, <http://soiltest.umass.edu>



When is the best time to test ?

- At least 6-8 weeks *after* a lime, sulfur, or fertilizer application.
- Best: Fall, Second best: Early Spring
- Any time when starting new planting area.

What do I need to collect a soil sample ?

- Trowel or shovel
- Bucket
- Coarse sieve or screen
- Drying tray or plate
- Zip-lock bag

How do I collect samples ?

- Treat each garden area individually.
- Avoid sampling when very wet.
- Remove a plug of soil from surface to proper depth.

Sample depth:

- 3-4" Lawn
- 6-8" Flower or vegetable garden
- 10-12" Trees or shrubs

Procedure:

- Collect 4-6 samples for small area, 8-12 for large.
- Mix samples together in bucket.
- Place 1 cup dry, sifted sample in labeled zip-lock bag.
- Note approximate size and type of area- vegetable, flower, lawn, shrub ...

