



## George Leigh Minor Plant and Soil Health Center

Soil Nutrient Analysis Laboratory  
University of Connecticut  
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**UConn**  
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE,  
HEALTH AND NATURAL  
RESOURCES  
EXTENSION & PLANT SCIENCE  
AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

# SOIL SAMPLING INSTRUCTIONS

## FOR AGRONOMIC CROPS & CONSERVATION PLANTINGS

**Note:** Soil tests aid in diagnosing only those problems resulting from a lack or excess of certain plant nutrients and/or incorrect soil pH (level of acidity or alkalinity). Other factors that may adversely affect plant growth include soil drainage, rainfall, amount of sunlight, insects, plant diseases, weeds, winter injury and misuse of pesticides or other chemicals. None of these is identified by a soil test. Agronomic growers may want to contact their local Cooperative Extension Educator for specific questions about grain crops, hayfields or pasture, Richard Meinert ([richard.meinert@uconn.edu](mailto:richard.meinert@uconn.edu)). The [UConn Plant Diagnostic Lab](#) may also be a useful resource.

You typically will receive soil test results and fertilizer recommendations within 7 to 10 business days from receipt of your sample except during our busy months of April and May when it may take 14 business days or more. **Do not apply more than the recommended amount of fertilizer.** Too much nitrogen and/or phosphorus can pollute ground and surface waters.

Limestone and fertilizer recommendations based on improperly taken soil samples may be inaccurate and possibly, harmful to plants. Follow the instructions below to obtain a **representative sample**. Submit **one cup** of soil for the standard nutrient analysis and **two cups** if additional tests, like organic matter or soil texture, are also requested.

### Filling out the soil sample submission form:

1. Please fill out the agronomic/conservation crop sample submission form to accompany your sample(s). It is especially important to list the **crop code** for which recommendations are wanted. We cannot make recommendations without knowing the crop being grown.
2. Fertilizer recommendations for new seedlings are different from those for maintenance situations. Therefore, be sure to **indicate if the crop has been planted**.
3. Because **manure additions** supply plant nutrients, downward adjustments in recommended rates of fertilizer are made when manure is applied for a crop. Try to provide as accurate an estimate as you can of the kind and rate of manure used.

**When and how to sample:**

1. Late October or early November is usually the best time to sample, but samples may be taken at any time during the year when temperature (lack of frost) and moisture conditions permit.
2. Areas differing in topography, drainage, soil texture, manure additions, soil organic matter content (light colored versus dark colored) or intended crop usage should be sampled and tested separately.
3. Under no circumstances should samples represent areas larger than 15 acres.
4. Avoid sampling unusual spots such as former sites of manure or compost piles and areas where limestone or fertilizer has been spilled in previous years.
5. It is imperative that the soil sample represent accurately the entire sampling area. To obtain a representative sample, take a uniform core or thin slice of soil from at least 20 evenly distributed places within a given area. Sample the plow layer. Put the slices or cores in a clean container and thoroughly mix them. One cup of this soil mixture constitutes the soil sample.
6. Fill out and print the appropriate questionnaire and place it along with your sample(s) and a check payable to UConn (\$18.00/sample for standard nutrient analysis) in a sturdy mailing envelope or box. If multiple samples are being sent at one time, be sure to **label the outside of each bag** (using a permanent marker) with a sample name and/or number. If 10 or more samples are submitted at one time, see information on our multi-sample **discount policy for commercial growers**.
7. Send samples to:  
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