

SOIL SAMPLING INSTRUCTIONS

FOR COMMERCIAL FRUIT, VEGETABLE & FIELD GROWN NURSERY CROPS

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. Commercial fruit growers can contact Evan Lentz (evanl.entz@uconn.edu) and commercial vegetable growers can contact Shuresh Ghimire (shuresh.ghimire@uconn.edu) with specific questions. The [UConn Plant Diagnostic Lab](#) may also be a useful resource to growers.

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 commercial vegetable/fruit/field grown nursery 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 or plantings are different from those for maintenance situations. Therefore, be sure to **indicate if the crop has been planted.**

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 unless the soil is frozen.
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 samples 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, compost or mulch piles and areas where limestone or fertilizer has been spilled in previous years.

5. It is imperative that the soil sample represents accurately the entire sampling area. To obtain a representative sample, take a uniform core or thin slice of soil from at least 12 evenly distributed places within a given area. Sample the plow layer, usually the top 6 to 8 inches. Put the slices or cores in a clean container and thoroughly mix them. **One cup** of this soil mixture constitutes the soil sample. Transfer this one cup sample into a zipper lock bag and seal.

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** 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:

**George Leigh Minor Plant and Soil Health Center
Soil Nutrient Analysis Laboratory
University of Connecticut
27A Manter Road, Storrs, CT, 06269**