SOIL TESTING

Soil testing is a tool used to help make informed decisions about the management of soil nutrients – whether for a garden, lawn, field or forest. Soil tests provide information on fertilizer needs, helping to save money and time. Soil tests can also help protect the environment from contaminated runoff or groundwater pollution caused by over-fertilization.

Clallam Conservation District offers a low-cost soil testing service to residents of Clallam County. For $20 per sample, soil will be tested for:

→ pH
→ Nitrate-nitrogen
→ Phosphate
→ Potassium
→ Magnesium
→ Calcium
→ Sodium
→ Organic matter
→ Cation exchange capacity

Conservation District staff will help you interpret the results and determine an appropriate schedule for applying the nutrients needed for your crops.

CLALLAM CONSERVATION DISTRICT
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Steps to Getting Your Soil Tested

Use this brochure as a guide to take samples of the soil from the area that you would like tested. If you need any help with this process please call or stop by our office.

Bring your soil to the Conservation District office on the **1st or 3rd Wednesday** of the month, along with **$20 per sample** to cover the costs of the lab testing and shipping. We will send your sample to a certified lab to be tested.

When we receive your soil test results from the lab, generally within 14 days, we will contact you to come pick up the results or have them mailed to you. We will help you interpret the results and determine how to proceed with any recommendations made by the soil-testing lab.

When To Test Your Soil

Soil tests should be taken in the spring or fall for established sites, and at any time of year for new seedings and plantings. Taking a soil test every two to three years is usually adequate to monitor nutrient levels; however, if management practices change, testing more frequently may be necessary.

Where to Take a Soil Sample

Avoid sampling unusual spots, such as near manure piles or very wet areas. Separate samples should be taken if areas are managed differently, or if crop, soil type or slope are different.

Supplies Needed

→ Spade, shovel or soil probe
→ Knife
→ Bucket
→ Plastic *Ziploc* bag or soil testing bag

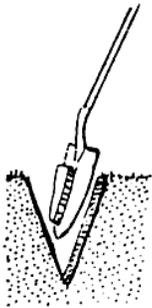*Be sure supplies are clean to avoid contaminating the sample.

Taking a Soil Sample

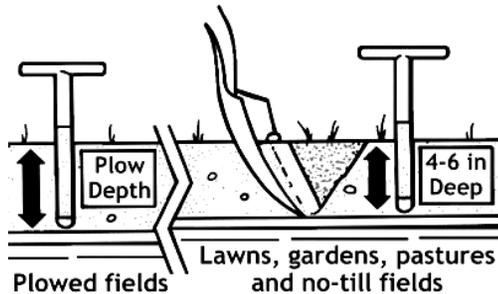## Step 1: Remove vegetation and organic material on the surface of the area to be sampled.

Thatch or Mulch

SAMPLE HERE

Step 2: Take soil samples to the correct depth
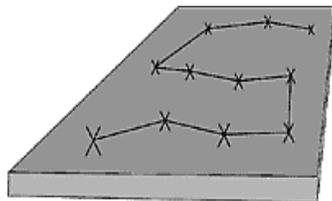
If you use a shovel and a knife, dig a hole 4 to 6 inches deep. Take a slice of soil ½ inch thick and 4 to 6 inches deep and keep it on the shovel. From the center of this slice, cut a strip one-half inch wide from top to bottom and put it in the bucket.

Typically sample lawns, gardens, pastures and no-till fields at a depth of 4-6 inches and plowed fields to the plow depth.

Plow Depth

4-6 in Deep

Plowed fields

Lawns, gardens, pastures and no-till fields

Step 3: Take a representative sample

Follow step 2 to obtain 10 to 15 subsamples in your bucket, taken from random locations within the sampling area.

Step 4: Mix and package the soil sample

Thoroughly mix the subsamples in the bucket. Break up any large clumps of soil.

SOIL SAMPLE BAG

Fill the soil sample bag to the line indicated on the side of the bag. Samples can also be put in plastic or paper bags and filled with **3 cups** of soil.

Step 5: Bring your soil sample to our office the 1st or 3rd Wednesday of the month. The results will be back in about 14 days.

Place your soil sample in the refrigerator if you can't get it to us within 24 hours. This prevents continued breakdown of nutrients, which can lead to inaccurate test results.

Clallam Conservation District has no intention of competing with private testing labs, and offers this service in response to a perceived need for affordable soil testing. A list of private testing labs in the Northwest is available upon request.

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