WHY TEST MY SOIL?

Florida has plenty of sunshine and rainfall, but its soils are often lacking in nutrients and other attributes necessary for good plant growth. To improve your soil's productivity, you should know each of the following soil attributes:

- pH
- Lime requirement
- Major nutrient levels (P,K, Ca, Mg)
- Micronutrient levels (Cu, Mn, Zn)
- Irrigation water quality

If you don't have this information, a soil test may help. The UF/IFAS Extension Soil Testing Laboratory (ESTL) conducts tests on soil samples year-round. ESTL offers soil tests for home and commercial growers.

HOW DO I TAKE A SOIL SAMPLE?

1. Before sampling, develop a soil sampling plan for your field or yard. Samples should best represent the area being tested, so collect samples from the areas that are of the same soil type, appearance, or cropping history. Problem areas or areas that are different should be sampled and submitted separately. From this plan, count the number of samples you will collect. About 1-2 representative samples from each area of the home yard or landscape and 1-5 samples from 20-40 acres of commercial farms should be collected and sent for analysis.
2. Contact your local county UF/IFAS Extension office for soil sample bags, shipping boxes, and sample submission forms free of charge, as well as advice about sampling. Forms are also available on our website. Assemble all the materials you need to complete sampling according to your plan.
3. Collect soil from 20 or more spots within each area, mixing these samples in a clean plastic bucket.
4. Sample from soil surface to depth of tillage, usually 0 to 6 inches.
5. Spread the composited material on clean paper or other suitable material to air dry. Do not send wet samples.
6. Mix the dry soil, and place about one pint of soil in a labeled sample bag or to the dotted line on our sampling bag.

HOW DO I SEND SAMPLES TO THE LAB?

1. Enter each sample's identification on its sample bag or bottle and in the "Sample Identification" column. List each sample separately.
2. Include the Test Code for each desired test or circle the cost of the test. Enter costs for the analysis in the cost column.
3. Crop Codes are required to get lime and fertilizer recommendations. Crop Codes can be found on the back of the forms.
4. Sum the costs of all samples and analyses. Make check or money order payable to: **University of Florida.** Checks written in any other name(s) will NOT be honored, will be returned and will cause an avoidable delay in processing the samples.
5. Include the completed Test Information Sheet and the check or money order in the shipping box with the sample(s).

HOW LONG BEFORE I GET THE RESULTS BACK?

Typically, a test report will be emailed/mailed to you within 2 working days after your sample arrives at the Extension Soil Testing Laboratory. Contact your county Extension agent at the number and address listed on your report with any questions about the report and its recommendations.

More information about plant nutrient problems may be obtained with a plant tissue test and/or a water test.

WHAT OTHER TESTS CAN I GET?

ESTL offers testing for irrigation water samples, plant tissue and livestock waste.

IRRIGATION WATER TEST

Hardness and fine sediments can clog the nozzles of irrigation systems and high salt content can adversely affect the soil pH and plant health. This is particularly important to those depending on wells for irrigation and those using reclaimed water for landscape irrigation. Reclaimed water may at times contain some plant essential minerals.

PLANT TISSUE TEST

Determining nutrient concentration in plant tissue samples can be important for perennial plants, crops and home lawns (all plant species that grow more than a season or a year).

A plant tissue test is recommended especially when the leaves exhibit any deficiency symptoms or when growth is inhibited. In the case of perennial plant species a soil test alone may not provide the necessary insight on nutrient deficiencies. Certain physiological imbalances may occur, either inhibiting the uptake from soils or usage after uptake within the plants, despite application of nutrients to the soils as per the recommendations. Additional diagnosis and nutrient adjustments may help overcome the deficiencies and growth imbalances.

The need for the water and/or plant tissue tests can be ascertained along with obtaining additional information on any of the tests by contacting your local extension agent or Master Gardener at your local UF/IFAS Extension Office.

HERE IS A LIST OF OUR AVAILABLE TESTS AND TEST PACKAGES:

LANDSCAPE AND VEGETABLE GARDEN TEST
pH, Lime Requirement, P, K, Ca, Mg, Cu, Mn, Zn
PRODUCER SOIL TEST
pH, Lime Requirement, P, K, Ca, Mg, Cu, Mn, Zn, EC, OM
NUTRIENT TESTING FOR BAHIA PASTURES
pH, Lime Requirement, P, K, Ca, Mg, Cu, Mn, Zn, EC, OM, Tissue P
CONTAINER MEDIA TEST
pH, EC, NO_3-N, P, K, Ca, Mg
PRODUCER CITRUS TEST
pH, Lime Requirement, P, K, Ca, Mg, Cu, Mn, Zn, Tissue P
COMMERCIAL SOD TEST
pH, Lime Requirement, P, K, Ca, Mg, Cu, Mn, Zn
PINE NURSERY SOIL TEST
pH, Lime Requirement, P, K, Ca, Mg, Cu, Mn, Zn, EC, OM
WATER TEST
Ca, Mg, Total Carbonates, Fe, Mn, Na, Cl, EC, pH, Suspended Solids
PLANT TISSUE TEST
N, P, K, Ca, Mg, B, Cu, Fe, Mn, Zn
LIVESTOCK WASTE TEST
N, P, K, % Moisture, % Solids, % Ash, NH_3-N, pH, Cu, Zn, Mn

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT YOUR LOCAL UF/IFAS EXTENSION OFFICE.

UF/IFAS EXTENSION SOIL TESTING LABORATORY

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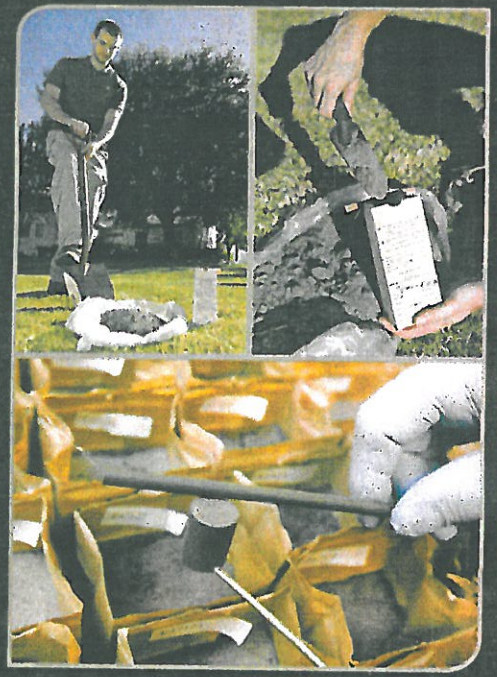
DON'T GUESS– GET A SOIL TEST