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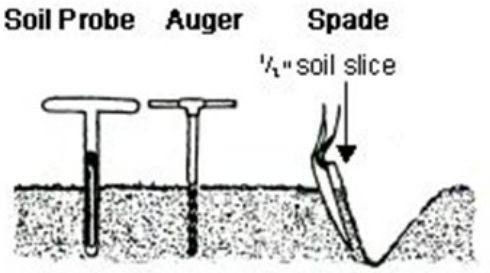
Thurston Conservation District EST 1948

Soil Sampling Procedures

A soil test is only as accurate as the soil sample taken. Follow the instructions below for best results.

SAMPLING TOOLS

Tools that may be used to take a soil sample include a soil-sampling probe, an auger, or a spade. Tools should be either stainless steel or chrome-plated to avoid contamination of the sample. Preferably, collect in a clean, dry plastic container as soil may pick up zinc for example, if the container is galvanized.

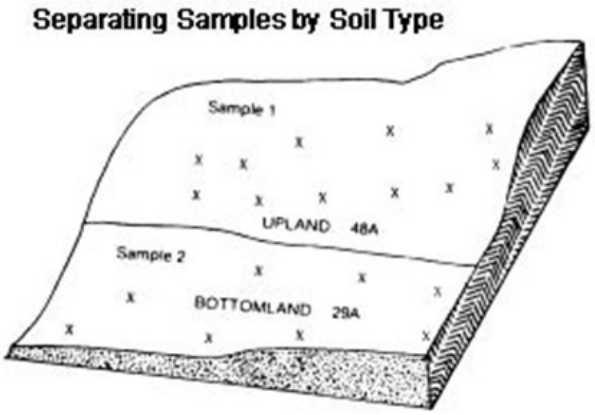


DETERMINING THE AREA TO BE SAMPLED

If you have a garden, lawn, pasture or orchard that is amended and treated relatively the same, one soil sample will be needed. One soil sample should contain soil from several spots throughout the area you are testing. If there are areas that differ in soil texture, drainage, plant growth, or crop type, then these should be sampled separately to get accurate results and recommendations. Thurston Conservation District can provide technical assistance for distinguishing areas or determining the number of samples.

HOW TO COLLECT A SAMPLE

The soil sample collected should be a combination of soil from 7 to 12 random locations within a selected area. See the picture to right for an example of taking a soil sample for a pasture or lawn. When collecting each subsample, remove any plant material (grass, roots, and crop residue) on the top 1-2 inches then sample to the depth of the root zone or tillage. For vegetable production, sample to the depth of 6-8 inches or to the depth of tillage. For pastures and lawns, sample to the depth of 6 inches. For fruit trees, sample to the depth of 9 inches and remove the top 2 inches.



Stay at least 50 feet away from barns, roads, lanes, or fence rows when sampling fields. Unless of specific interest, avoid dead furrows, corners of fields, end rows, and areas that are poorly drained or have had fertilizers or amendments dumped on them.

After you've collected all of your samples from 7 to 12 random locations, mix all of the samples thoroughly and combined into a clean plastic container or plastic Ziploc bag. The samples should be a total of 3 cups of soil.

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