



What you need to know about... **Soil testing**

Want a healthy landscape? The first step is to test your soil.
Soil testing is the #1 best practice for efficient landscaping that protects the environment.

Types of soil test

In-house Master Gardener pH soil testing

Sometimes adding a non-nutrient-based fertilizer such as lime is all a yard needs to green up. This test will tell you if your soil's pH only needs a little adjustment, which is typically less costly and better for the environment.

UF/IFAS Extension Laboratory soil testing

This test will provide more in-depth information. You can opt to receive a "pH and Lime Requirement Test" with recommendations of how much lime to apply, or a "Soil Fertility Test", which provides analysis for six nutrients to give more information about exactly what your yard needs.

To submit a sample:

1. Pick up a free soil test kit from the UF/IFAS Marion County Extension Service. There is a small fee for the laboratory to analyze the sample.
2. Follow instructions on this form for collecting soil sample. On your soil test laboratory form, check one of the following:
 - Test A** - determine pH and lime requirements (\$3.00).
 - Test B** - determine pH, lime requirements, phosphorous, potassium, calcium and magnesium (\$7.00).
3. Mail soil sample to the Extension Soil Testing Laboratory in Gainesville.
4. Results will be e-mailed or mailed to you approximately two weeks after receiving the sample.



How to collect a soil sample

1. Collect soil samples from several locations throughout the area to be tested.
 - a. At each testing location, pull back mulch, grass, and ground cover to expose bare soil.
 - b. Using a hand trowel or small shovel, dig a hole about 6 inches deep.
 - c. Collect about half a cup of soil from the bottom of the hole.
2. Using a clean container, mix the soil collected from each of the holes together.
3. Scoop out about a cup of the mixed soil, making sure to remove any debris like gravel or twigs.
4. If soil is wet, let it dry by setting it out in the sun or in a warm oven. Wet soil will produce inaccurate pH readings.
5. Place dry soil in a paper bag. Do not use plastic bags or glass containers.
6. Bring sample to the Master Gardener Plant Clinic.

**For more information, contact UF/IFAS
Marion County Extension Service at
352-671-8400.**

The Marion County Fertilizer Education Program is brought to you by the Marion County Board of County Commissioners and the UF/IFAS Marion County Extension Service. For program information, call 352-671-8686.

