



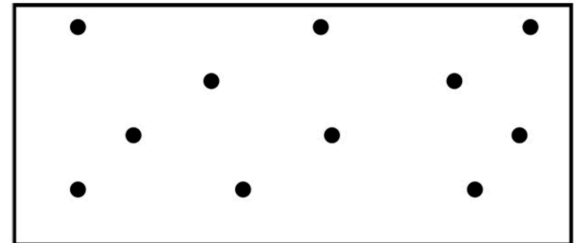
HOW TO CONDUCT A SOIL TEST

Soil Testing Know-How

- It is highly recommended to test soil prior to planting at any new location
- it is advisable to do follow up testing every 3-5 years thereafter
- Conduct soil testing same time each year for more accurate trends in the soil fertility
 - For cropland and vegetable production, it is best to sample in the fall of the year
 - For pastures and perennial crops, it is best to sample during the late summer period
- Standard soil testing often measures for:
 - Soil pH, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium, and nitrogen
 - For additional fees, you may request a test for organic matter, soluble salts, and other micronutrients.
 - Special tests for potentially harmful elements are also available and advisable
 - Including heavy metals like lead, cadmium, chromium, copper, etc
 - Most tests do not check for pesticide residues, gas, oil or unknown pollutants

Pennsylvania State University Soil Test

- It is recommended to take a standard fertility test and a sorbed metals test
 - **Standard Fertility Test:** measures the levels of nutrients that are beneficial to plants; costs \$10, plus more if you want more detail
 - **Sorbed Metals Test:** measures the levels of heavy metals in soil; costs \$90
1. Take 5- 10 soil samples from around site
 2. Depth of digging should be 8 inches and you only need a few tablespoons of soil from each digging hole
 3. Mix soil in bucket and lay on newspaper to let it dry overnight
 4. Put 1 cup of sample in zipper-seal plastic bag with date and name of site and contact information
 5. Print out [soil submission form](#) for a standard fertility test and [sorbed metals test](#) and fill both forms out
 6. Print out credit card form and fill out and make checks payable to The Pennsylvania State University
 7. Put everything in big envelope and send everything to: *The Pennsylvania State University, 111 Ag Analytical Services Lab, University Park, PA 16802-1114*
- Test results will be come back in around 2 weeks





- An alternative method is to purchase standard fertility test kits from county offices of Penn State Extension or from commercial firms or garden centers
- The Penn State extension website contains more instructions on how to collect soil samples
- If results are concerning, reach out to the USDA office to try to get more precise locational testing; if they remain concerning, raised beds lined with weed fabric and filled with a topsoil/compost mix are recommended for growing space

USDA Soil Test

- Contact local USDA/NRCS office (1415 North Broad Street Philadelphia, PA 19122) at 215-789-2525 to inquire about soil testing
 - The Philadelphia USDA office has a soil scientist on staff and a few times a year offers more comprehensive soil testing and analysis for community green spaces
 - It may be several months before a soil sampling visit can be scheduled
 - Free of cost offering may depend on their office's current program funding

