

Soil analysis for homeowners



Laboratory Services will conduct an analysis of your soil to let you know exactly what your soil is lacking in your garden, lawn, flowerbeds and fields.

Although soil sampling can be done any time of the year, it is recommended that soil sampling should be done in the fall, after the crop has been removed. This allows sufficient time after the analysis is completed and results are received to plan for the following season. Sampling in the early spring, when the water level is high, can cause misleading analysis, especially for pH and lime requirement. For consistency, it is best to sample soils at the same time each year.

Soil analysis and resulting recommendations can only be as accurate as your sampling technique. Samples must be representative of the entire area for which recommendations are to be made. Improperly taken samples will result in tests that are misleading, which in turn, leads to inaccurate recommendations which can cost you money through:

- Low yields
- Using the wrong fertilizer, or
- Using fertilizer you don't need

How to take a vegetable garden or a flower soil sample

Step 1 Obtain soil sample boxes and sample submission forms from Laboratory Services in Truro. Submission forms can also be found online, and soil boxes can be sent to you by mail upon request.

Step 2 Take a garden trowel and go down 12 to 15 centimeters (5 to 6 inches) in 6 to 10 different areas of your garden or flower bed.

Step 3 In a clean bucket or pail, empty the contents of each area. Remove plant debris. After you have done this, mix the soil together.

Step 4 From this mixture, take a 500 ml (2 cup) sample. This sample will be a good representation of the garden or flower bed soil.

Step 5 Place the 500 ml (2 cup) sample into the box. If you do not have a soil box, a freezer bag that can hold the full sample of soil can be used.

Step 6 Send soil sample and completed sample submission form to the address on the back of this brochure.

In order to be sure that you get the best analysis for your soil, please include the name of the crop you are growing or where the sample was taken. E.g. Is the soil from your vegetable garden or from your flower bed?

How to take a lawn soil sample

Step 1 Obtain soil sample boxes and sample submission forms from Laboratory Services in Truro. Submission forms can also be found online, and soil boxes can be sent to you by mail upon request.

Step 2 With a garden trowel go down 10 centimeters (4 inches) in 6 to 10 different areas of your lawn.

Step 3 Into a clean bucket or pail, empty the contents of each area. Remove grass clumps. After you have done this, mix the soil together.

Step 4 From this mixture, take a 500 ml (2 cup) sample. This sample will be a good representation of your lawn soil.

Step 5 Place the sample into the soil box. If you do not have a soil box, a freezer bag that can hold the sample of soil can be used.

Step 6 Send soil sample and completed sample submission form to the address on the back of this brochure.

How to take farm field soil samples

Step 1 Obtain soil sample boxes and sample submission forms from Laboratory Services in Truro. Submission forms can also be found online, and soil boxes can be sent to you by mail upon request.

Step 2 Make a plan of the farm and outline the soil sampling pattern you intend to follow, keeping a record of field numbers sampled, etc.

Step 3 Take a minimum of 20 individual samples from each field of 10 hectares or less if the area is of uniform slope, soil color, soil type, drainage and cropping practice. Place these individual samples in a clean bucket, mix thoroughly, breaking up soil clumps and removing rocks, and take a composite sample of approximately 500 ml (2 cups) for analysis.

Step 4 Areas of non-uniform slope, color, texture, drainage, and cropping practice should be sampled separately, as in Step 3.

Step 5 Individual samples that comprise the composite sample should be taken in a random pattern encompassing the entire area. If possible, samples should be taken with a soil sampling auger.

Step 6 Individual samples should be of a uniform 15 cm (6 inch) depth for most crops; 5–8 cm (2–3 inches) for sod crops.

Step 7 Place composite sample (step 3) in soil box, mark the field number, sample number, and your address on the box. Fill in the sample submission form as completely as possible.

The crop name must be selected from those on the back of the sample submission form in order for ratings and required applications to be given.

The crop name is the crop to be grown for which analysis is being requested.

Step 8 Send soil sample and completed sample submission form to the address on the back of this brochure.

Hours of business

Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 4:30pm.

Samples received after 3:30pm will be logged into the system the next business day.

Submission forms can be found on the website or directly from Lab Services Sample Reception.

Payment methods

We currently accept Visa, MasterCard, debit, cash, cheque or money order.

For samples submitted by mail, credit card payment can be made over the phone, or a cheque or money order made out to the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture can be sent with the sample(s).

Sample drop-off/mail address

Laboratory Services

176 College Road
Harlow Institute
Truro, Nova Scotia B2N 2P3

NSDA regional offices

Samples can be dropped off at these locations:

Digby

84 Warwick Street
Digby, Nova Scotia B0V 1A0
Phone: 902-638-2395

Kentville

32 Main Street
Kentville, Nova Scotia B4N 1J50
Phone: 902-679-6021

Antigonish

190 Beech Hill Road
RR#6 Antigonish
Nova Scotia B2G 0B4
Phone: (902) 863-4705

Strathlorne Forest Nursery

Nova Scotia Lands and Forestry
15039 Route 19, Inverness
Nova Scotia B0E 1N0
Phone: 902-258-2626

For more information

**Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture
Agriculture & Food Operations
Animal & Plant Laboratory**

Tel: 902-893-6565

novascotia.ca/agriculture-labs