

NDSU Soil Testing Lab

How Do I Take a Soil Sample?

Tools needed:

- *pail or other open container at least 1 gallon in size
- *shovel or other soil extraction device
- *newspaper
- *household fan (if available)
- *bag(s) for samples (paper for wet samples, or paper or plastic for dried samples)

1. Locate several (2-6) spots in site to be sampled. Spots should represent site to be sampled.
2. Remove non-soil (grass, thatch, leaves, plastic, etc.) layer from surface of sampling location.
3. Use shovel or soil extraction device to remove sample to approximately 6 inches deep.
4. Place sample in pail or container.
5. Repeat steps 2-4 for additional depths or remaining sampling spots.
6. Stir soil in pail so thoroughly mixed.
7. For dried sample: **Note: we recommend sending dried samples to improve data accuracy*
 1. lay out newspaper on floor or table
 2. spread soil sample out on newspaper so soil layer is about 1 inch thick
 3. try to break up large (golf ball size or larger) clods in soil
 4. if possible, have household fan blowing on sample to facilitate drying
 5. stir sample occasionally
 6. allow sample to dry at least 24 hours or until soil color does not change when stirred
 7. Label plastic or paper bag with name, address, sample depth increment, and some sort of sample identifier (GARDEN1, LAWN, etc.)
 8. place at least 1 pint of dried soil in bag
8. For moist sample: **Note: we recommend sending dried samples to improve data accuracy*
 1. Label paper bag with name, address, sample depth increment, and some sort of sample identifier (GARDEN1, LAWN, etc.)
 2. place at least 1 pint of moist soil in paper bag

How Do I Send Soil Samples?

1. Close bag(s) containing soil samples securely.
2. Ensure sample bag(s) contain name, address, sample depth increment, and sample identifier.
3. Place sample bag(s) in a sturdy box, preferably surrounded by some sort of packing material, and seal up box.
4. Include the completed soil information sheet with the sample, and no payment is needed, as you will be sent an invoice when the testing is completed
5. Ship via mail or a parcel service to the following address:

NDSU Soil Testing Lab
Dept. 7680
P.O. Box 6050
Fargo, ND 58108-6050 (Postal Address)

NDSU Soil Testing Lab
1360 Bolley Drive
103 Waldron Hall
Fargo, ND 58102 (Physical address, for UPS/FedEx)