

Instructions sheet for taking a lawn and garden soil sample

Tools: A soil sample sent in for testing is actually a mixture of many small soil samples. Most homeowners do not have the special tool to collect small soil samples called a soil probe. Instead homeowners can achieve perfectly fine results using a hand trowel or shovel and a bucket.

Where to take the sample: Soil samples are taken in regions where the soil is managed the same. For example, if your front yard is grass and your backyard has a vegetable garden. In this scenario, you will submit a soil sample for both the grass area and the vegetable garden. This example can be seen in Figure 1 where the grass area is represented in green with pink circles making up sample one. The vegetable garden is represented in brown with yellow circles making up sample two. If your front and backyard is grass only, only one sample needs to be submitted as seen in Figure 2 where the grass area is represented in green with pink circles making up one sample.

Figure 1. Property with a backyard vegetable garden

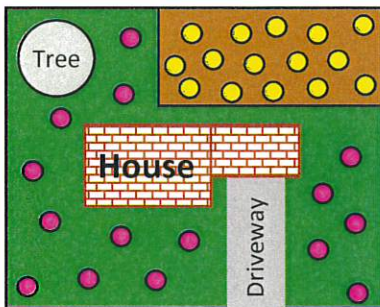
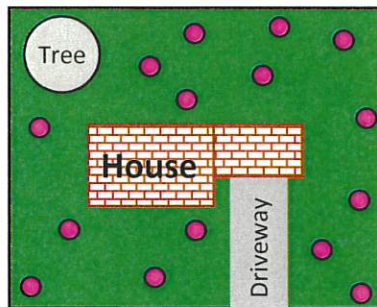


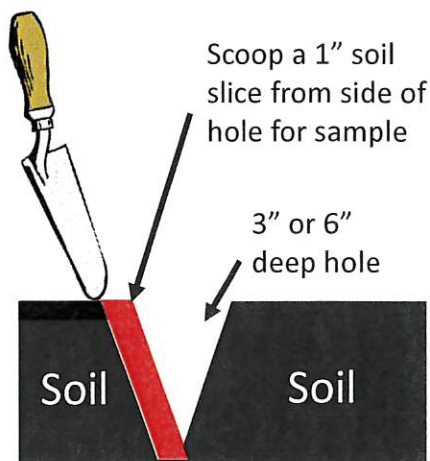
Figure 2. Property with no backyard vegetable garden



Taking the sample: If you are unsure of any utilities underground in your yard, please call 811 to locate underground live wires so that your safety is ensured. Using your digging tool, dig a hole to 6 inches deep in areas with no existing grass, and 3 inches deep in areas with existing grass.

Once the hole is dug, scoop off a one-inch slice from the side of the hole, all the way to the hole bottom using your digging tool. Remove this soil slice and put it in a pail. This can be seen below in Figure 3. Remove any live grass, large roots, or other plant material from the slice. Repeat this process 15 times, randomly spaced apart in your sampling region. Figures 1 and 2 above use colored circles to display how to space apart your sampling locations in each region for your sample. Try to stay away from areas where the soil is not representative of the rest of the yard. This would include under trees and along gravel driveways.

Figure 3. Taking the sample



Submitting the sample: With the samples just collected from the sample region, thoroughly mix them together in the pail. From this mix, submit 2 to 3 cups of soil. This will fill $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the supplied soil sample bag. Complete the identification tag on the side of sample bag. Follow directions on the included submission form for mailing the sample.

Questions regarding sample collection can be directed to the ISU Extension and Outreach Office of Mahaska County by calling 641-673-5841. More information on youtube.com: search for "Soil Sample Instructional Video" from the University of Missouri Extension. Originally created by Ray Kruse, Dubuque County Extension, March 2019. Used with permission.