



Soil Sampling Instructions for Biology Assessments

Please read all steps first.

You'll need:

- A soil sampler, apple corer or small spade
- Clean bucket
- New plastic bag like a ziplock
- Permanent marker
- Soil Biology Assessment Form

Decide what you are sampling

For soil biology assessments, it's important to sample exactly the thing you are interested in testing. For example, if you have trees, bare ground, and a vegetable garden you want to test, it would be three different samples taken separately. Compost, compost tea and compost extract also have specific instructions. Instructions for each scenario are below.

Sample Depth for Soil Sampling

Soil samples should be taken to a depth of 3 inches. Remove any top debris. If you cannot go 3 inches deep due to compaction, take the sample as deep as you can go. The sample, or core, needs to be about 1 inch in diameter. If you don't have a soil sampler, an apple corer or a hand spade will work.

Sampling for Plant Health Evaluation

Keep like plants together when sampling. In other words, if you are interested in the health of your trees, then keep all the tree samples together and don't mix them with any other kind of plants like grass or vegetables. Keep healthy plants samples apart from unhealthy plants. For example, if you have 6 trees and 2 are unhealthy, sample A would be from the healthy trees and sample B would be from the sick trees. You'd submit them as two separate samples. If you have a weedy patch in your lawn or pasture, sample that separately from the rest of the non weedy areas. You will get more useful results if you keep the samples to the same kinds of plants. For instance, if you have a vegetable garden and you have both tomatoes & beans, you'd sample the

tomato plants together and the bean plants together and have two different samples to submit. Note for your records where you took each sample.

Take the sample halfway between the stem of the plant and its drip-line (the edge of its canopy). Take samples from 3-5 different plants of the same kind when possible. Put each core in a clean bucket and gently mix. Place about 4 oz in a clean ziplock type bag; be sure to use a bag that allows you to use less than 50% of the bag. Close the bag, leaving some air inside. Don't put anything but the soil sample inside the bag. Label the outside of the bag with the date and your sample identification.

Keep the sample at the same temperature at which it was taken. In other words, you'll want to leave it outside in the shade where it stays at about the same temperature as the area around the plant where you took it. Fill out the Soil Biology Assessment Form and include with your sample. We recommend USPS 2 day flat rate priority shipping. Please ensure that your samples will arrive on a weekday to avoid delays in evaluation.

Sampling Bare Ground or Pasture

Make a sketch or map of the area that you plan to sample so that future assessments can be repeated in the same locations. Randomly select 5-6 areas per acre. Avoid sampling near boundaries or any area that is markedly different from the rest of the land, like areas where hay has been sitting or depressions or ridges. From the 5-6 areas, take 3-5, three inch cores, discard any surface plant material, and place them in a clean bucket. Mix all the cores together thoroughly in your bucket.

Place about 4 oz in a clean ziplock type bag; be sure to use a bag that allows you to use less than 50% of the bag. Close the bag, leaving some air inside. Don't put anything but the soil sample inside the bag. Label the outside of the bag with the date and your sample identification, and please indicate whether it is bare ground or pasture.

Keep the sample at the same temperature at which it was taken. In other words, you'll want to leave it outside in the shade where it stays at about the same temperature as the area around the plant where you took it. Fill out the Soil Biology Assessment Form and include with your sample. We recommend USPS 2 day flat rate priority shipping. Please ensure that your samples will arrive on a weekday to avoid delays in evaluation.

Sampling Compost

Take small samples from at least 5 different locations at different depths from a small compost pile. Take at least 20 samples from different locations & depths from a windrow. Mix the samples thoroughly in a clean bucket.

Place about 4 oz in a clean ziplock type bag; be sure to use a bag that allows you to use less than 50% of the bag. Close the bag, leaving some air inside. Don't put anything but the compost sample inside the bag. Label the outside of the bag with the date and your sample identification, and please indicate it is compost.

Keep the sample at the same temperature at which it was taken. In other words, you'll want to leave it outside in the shade where it stays at about the same temperature as the compost pile. Fill out the Soil Biology Assessment Form and include with your sample. We recommend USPS 2 day flat rate priority shipping. Please ensure that your samples will arrive on a weekday to avoid delays in evaluation.

Liquid Samples

We can evaluate compost tea & compost extract for biology. Compost tea requires overnight shipping or courier service to avoid having the sample go anaerobic before we receive it. Please coordinate with us if you are sending liquid samples in for evaluation so that we can schedule the assessment immediately. We recommend overnight shipping for compost extract, but you can safely ship it 2 day.

Using a clean, watertight container, take samples from your brewer, extractor, sprayer or spray nozzle. If sampling from a brewer or extractor that is under aeration, take samples from several different depths. Fill your watertight container no more than 1/3 full to allow some oxygen to remain in the container. Ensure your container seals completely; we suggest taping it closed. Label the outside of the container with your sample ID and description. Fill out the Soil Biology Assessment Form and include with your sample.