

## What's in the box?

- This instructional brochure
- Pre-paid return shipping label
- Return box seal sticker
- One large containment bag
- Three different soil sample containers

## What you'll need:



A plastic bucket



A clean spade



Your soil test kit

### Tips:

Check to ensure the area you'll be sampling from is free of large stones that will interfere with digging by first using a long screw driver to probe for buried obstacles.

Avoid sampling when the soil is wet. If in doubt, do a squeeze test, by taking a large fistful of soil and squeezing it tightly. If any drips of water leak from between your clenched fingers, do not send the soil because it is too wet.

Do not use galvanized metal tools or buckets to collect your soil because it will change the results of your soil health test. For the best results, wash and dry your tools before starting and always use a clean plastic bucket.

Areas that are very different in drainage, soil texture and organic matter, or growing conditions are best sampled and tested separately.

Using a small, clean and dry plastic or wooden spoon can be useful for helping to fill the containers for your sample.

Soil Health Instruction Brochure VI  
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If you have any questions or concerns about collecting and sending your soil sample, scan here or visit [SoilHealth.ca](http://SoilHealth.ca) to read our FAQs.

## Questions?



[SoilHealth.ca](http://SoilHealth.ca)

## Welcome to your Soil Health Test Kit!

“Soil health is the capacity of soil to function as a living system... to sustain plant and animal productivity, maintain or enhance water and air quality, and promote plant and animal health.”

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

# Get ready...

# Get set...



# Get digging!

Believe it or not, the most important step of soil testing is the collection of a well-prepared, quality soil sample. You'll be making one, large, representative soil sample. This large sample is made up from separate smaller samples that you will collect from throughout the entire area you're interested in testing.

There's no minimum to the number of small samples you can collect but do not sample from a total area larger than 25 acres of land. We recommend you collect at least 15-20 small samples to make up your large, representative soil sample.

You'll want to collect soil samples from 6 to 8 inches (15-20 cm) below the surface, which is the area in which most plant roots will be growing. If you're collecting samples from your lawn or turf, the samples can be taken from a depth of 4-6 inches (10-15 cm).

Overall, you're sending us a sample for testing that is about 1.5 cups of soil.



## Collecting your soil sample

### Before you dig:

You may want to map out and keep track of the spots that you'll use to collect your separate smaller soil samples.

If possible, take your small soil samples from along a large imaginary W-shaped or Z-shaped, zig-zag pattern that covers the entire area you're interested in testing.



### Let's dig in!

1. Gently remove any debris or grass from the surface of the soil – focus on collecting only soil and avoid plants or rocks.



2. Using a clean, dry garden trowel, dig a hole to a depth of 4-6 inches (i.e., sampling turf and grass) or to a depth of 6-8 inches (i.e., sampling vegetables and fruits).



3. Remove a single, large scoop of soil from the side of the newly dug hole and place this scoopful into your clean, dry plastic bucket.



4. Repeat these collection steps at all your soil sampling spots.



## Preparing your soil sample

1. Break up any soil clumps or clods that are in your bucket and remove any rocks, roots and plant material.
2. Thoroughly mix all the soil in your bucket being sure to mix all the soil at the bottom and along the sides.
3. Get your 3 sample collection containers ready: cotton bag, plastic bag, and plastic vial.
4. You'll use the same method to fill all 3 of your soil sample containers and we recommend filling them one-at-a-time. Remember that you want to add at least 10-15 scoops of soil to each separate container so using a spoon can help.
5. Add a small scoop of soil to one of your sample containers. Take another scoop from your bucket and set it aside. Next, take a new scoop of soil from your bucket and add this to your sample container. Using this method ensures that your mixed soil is truly homogeneous and is best suited for testing.
6. Repeat step 5 for each of the three containers. The plastic containers have maximum fill lines, and the cotton bag can be filled to capacity.
7. Close your sample container properly to prevent spillage: spin the plastic bag and fold over the twist-ties; pull the strings to fully close the cotton bag and knot it tightly; and snap the vial lid completely shut.

### Sending your sample

1. Place each of the filled soil sample containers into the large, clear containment bag and ensure that it is sealed.
2. Do not place anything into the containment bag except for the 3 sample containers.
3. Add your soil samples to the original shipping box.
4. Apply the sealing sticker and the Return Shipping Label.
5. Ship your package at your local CanadaPost Office.