

LOUISIANA HOME LAWN SERIES

A guide to maintaining a healthy Louisiana lawn



How to Collect a Soil Sample

Soil testing is one of the most basic components for developing a sound turfgrass fertility program. A soil test is a chemical analysis that estimates concentrations of essential nutrients available for turfgrass growth during the growing season. Based on these analyses, it can be determined if supplemental nutrients in the form of fertilizers will be needed by turfgrass.

Soil Sample Frequency and Timing

Soil samples should always be submitted when renovating or installing new turfgrass areas. Soil samples for established turfgrass areas need to be submitted routinely every one to three years. It is also preferable that soil samples are collected at the same time of year. Poor turfgrass growth or higher sand content soils would necessitate increased soil sample collections and analysis.

Soil samples can be submitted any time of year, but it is preferable to submit them in late fall or winter. This will provide a sufficient period to develop a fertility plan for the next growing season and allow certain amendments, such as elemental sulfur used to lower soil pH, to be applied during less stressful environmental conditions.

Materials Needed for Collecting a Soil Sample

1. Plastic container (1 quart).
2. Soil probe or small shovel for collecting soil.
3. Soil sample boxes with labels.
4. Marking pen.

TIP: Do not use metal containers to collect soil samples. Metal containers can affect the soil test results.

Steps for Collecting a Soil Sample

STEP 1: Evaluate the area to determine the number of soil samples that will be required. Large areas or areas with different soil types will require more than one soil sample.

STEP 2: Do not collect soil samples from areas that have been recently fertilized or treated with amendments.

STEP 3: Collect soil to a depth of 4 to 6 inches randomly throughout the lawn.

STEP 4: Remove the turfgrass and other organic material before placing the soil into the plastic container.

STEP 5: Mix the soil within the container and place at least one-half pint of soil into the sample box.

STEP 6: Label the box and fill out any forms to ensure the analysis and recommendations are for the desired turfgrass species.

STEP 7: Submit samples to the laboratory for analysis.

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