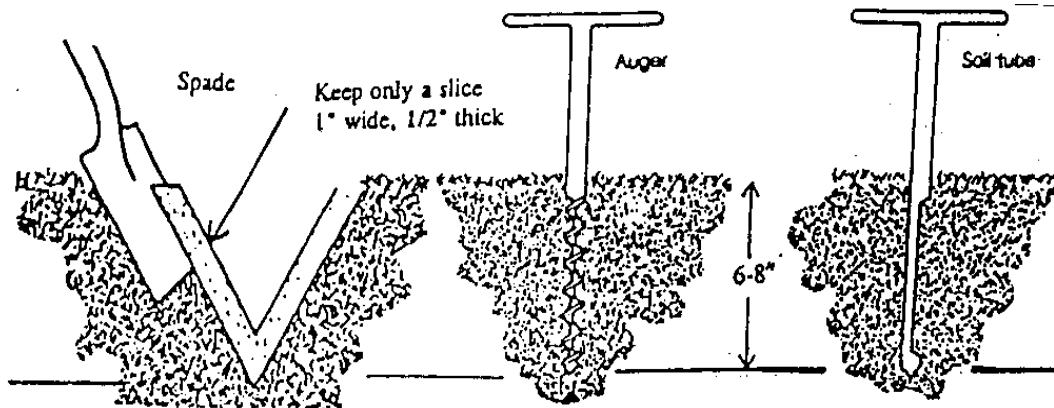


Soil pH Testing at Cornell Cooperative Extension

by Cornell Cooperative Extension Erie County Master Gardeners

How to Properly Obtain a Soil Sample

The results of soil tests for nutrients and pH are valuable only if the soil sample is **REPRESENTATIVE** of the soil layers from which the plants draw their nutrients. It is essential to obtain uniform slices or cores of soil from the top to the proper depth. A spade, an auger or a special soil sampling tube can be used. (see figure)



To properly obtain a soil sample for testing, select 8 to 10 spots in the garden or the lawn (sub samples) and follow these steps:

1. Scrape away any debris, mulch and 1/2" to 1" of the surface layer
2. Take a slice (core) of soil from each of these spots, digging all the way down to 8"- 10".
3. Mix these soil sub samples together and spread the mixed soil evenly on a clean surface to AIR DRY. It takes 2-4 days for a 1" thick layer of non-muddy soil to dry out, depending on air humidity and circulation.
4. Mix the dried soil again and remove any remaining debris or stones. (If possible grind it to pass through a 2mm sieve. Try not to handle the sample with your hands.)
5. Save only about **ONE CUP** of the dried soil in a clean container, not metal or galvanized, such as a plastic bag or jar, and label the container (not the lid) with your name and the area you took the sample.
6. Please find instructions on how to drop off your sample at: <http://erie.cce.cornell.edu/resources/soil-sample-drop-off-instructions>
7. Results will be mailed to you within ten (10) business days
8. **Soil pH Test Fee at CCE: \$2.00 per sample or 3 samples for \$5.00**